THE STORY OF THE BIBLE

BY

S. K. GEORGE

AUTHOR OF

Gandhi's Challenge to Christianity, Jesus Christ etc.

Foreword

by

RAJKUMARI AMRIT KAUR

24 DEC 1958
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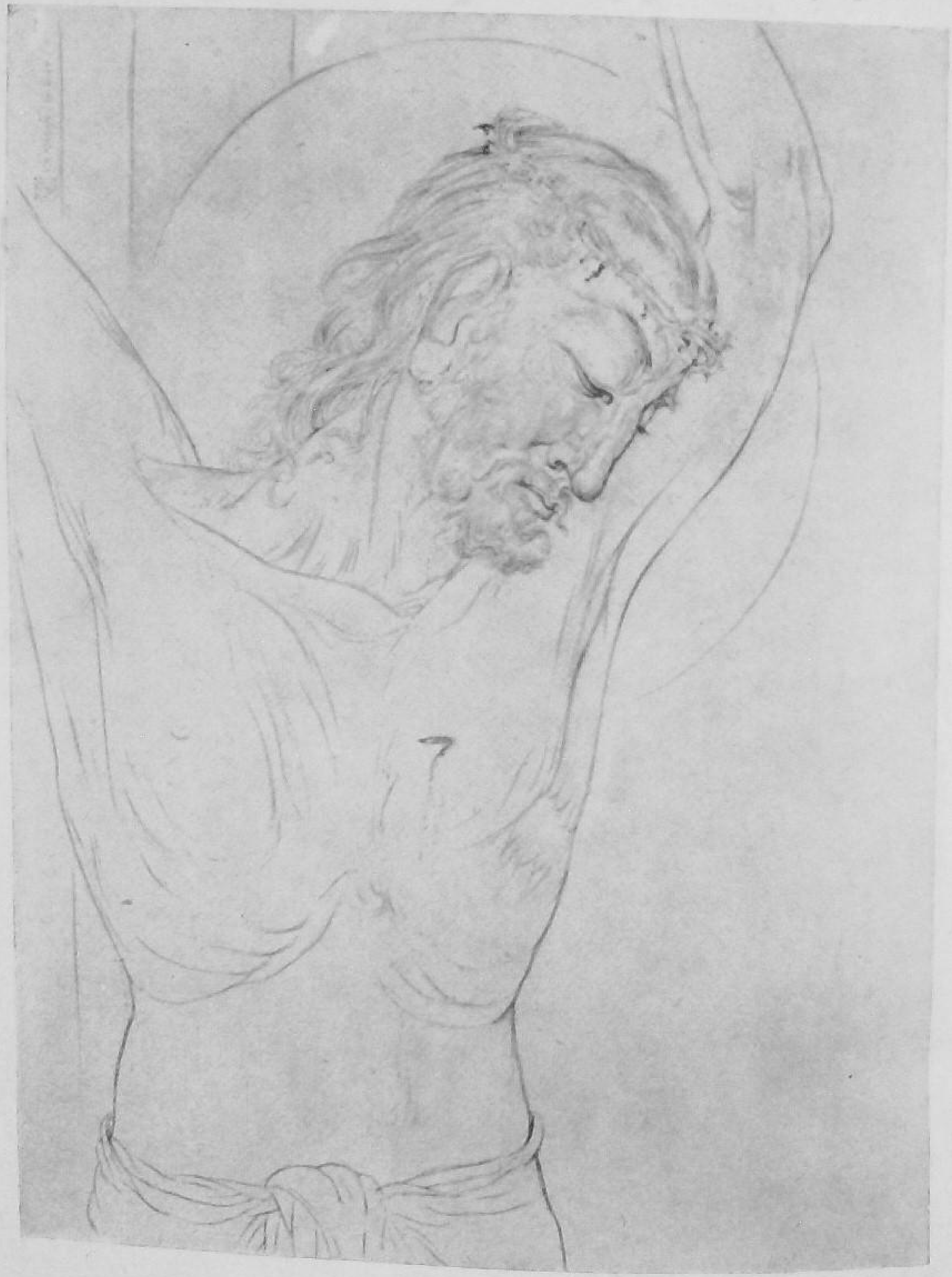

Christ on the Cross

In the Cross of Christ I glory,
Towering o'er the wrecks of time;
All the light of sacred story
Gathers round its head sublime.

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RAJKUMARI AMRIT KAUR

OFFICE OF THE PRINCIPAL, BASIC AGRICULTURAL TRAINING SCHOOL
24 DEC 1956
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To the Sacred Memory of
My Father,
Whose resonant readings from
The Bible,
In Home and Church,
First instilled in me my love of
The Book

PUBLISHERS' NOTE

We are glad to publish this book by Shri S. K. George. As the reader perhaps knows, this is his second book which we are publishing. The first was *Gandhi's Challenge to Christianity.* Those who have read it know the author as a devout Christian who tries to learn from and understand Gandhiji through Christ and vice versa. There are many others like him both in the East and the West. As a matter of fact, we know that to many the life of Gandhiji has been a key to understanding the legendary stories of many a prophet in history.

This book by Shri George is a narration of the story of both the Old and the New Testaments. To a certain extent the author has also attempted to interprete the great old story to the modern reader. He has also added a selection of the best passages from the Holy Book. It is hoped the book will help the general reader to know in a short compass about the Bible. Such knowledge of the various scriptures of the great religions of the world is necessary for and should be a valuable part of the cultural equipment of modern man. The liberalizing effect that it will have on his mind is very badly needed in these days of scientific materialism, agnosticism and nihilism.

From this point of view, the life of Gandhiji provides us an inspiring example. As we know, quite in his youthful days, when he was, say, in his religious adolescence, he was in England and shortly thereafter

in South Africa among Christians. Many of his countrymen who came in contact with him there were Mussalmans; there were Hindus and Parsis also. All these were mostly not highly learned men, and had imbibed the knowledge of their religion in the common traditional way. Unlike these, the Christians were cultured and learned men and women who loved to propagate their religion. Gandhiji's lot, in the most formative part of his religious life, was cast among such friends. As we know, at one time he was successfully prevailed upon to be a Christian, and but for the great influence of his friend and religious teacher Kavi Shri Raichandbhai, he would have been so. This non-conversion was of a unique type. It was not born of an egoistic belief in the superiority of the religion of his forefathers. He clung to that religion out of the great conviction that he cherished all through his whole life with all his being. He saw that none need leave off the religion of his birth unless it was found that it was basically wrong and hence could not be lived by him as a human being nor reformed. He came to realize that all religions were good for their adherents if they really lived them and strove with all their life to realize their common message of love, concord and brotherhood on this earth and beyond. This was really a great conversion for the struggling soul that Gandhiji was in his days in South Africa. At the same time Gandhiji saw and said that all the great religions of the world were true, but they also contained in them an element of circumstantial falsehood, from the point of view of the Eternal. It is upto the votary of every religion to live upto the eternal in it and to reform with his very life the evil that unhappily clings to everything emanating

in time and space. Men should look upon all religions as essentially true and therefore equal. This is a very revolutionary doctrine and is bound to have very great and far-reaching effects on the converting or missionary religions like Christianity, Islam etc. For the last few centuries India has been a battle-ground of the proselytizing activities of Christianity and Islam. Gandhiji's advent in India in 1915 meant a very great thing on such a background. His living faith that all religions at their best are essentially equal has had great influence on Hinduism also. While on the one hand it put a great question-mark against proselytization and mass-conversion, on the other, it set in motion the great forces of reform in Hinduism also. His life of a devout Hindu meant an all-out reform in the life and thought of the Hindu society also. All of us know this great story ; its epic effect is still with us and is working as a potent force and a great leaven in our body politic. But this is not the occasion to dilate upon it here.

The author in his preface refers to the compulsory teaching of the Bible in missionary schools. To say the least, it was a very un-educational way of teaching the Bible. While on the one hand it brought the Book to the notice of the educated few, on the other, it did create pardonable resentment in many a sensitive mind amongst our youth. With the advent of Swaraj this compulsion is gone. But we need not fear that the Bible or for the matter of that, knowledge of religion will go with it. Rather the removal of any compulsion in matters religious and spiritual is the prerequisite of its true teaching, and signs are already to be seen which show that education in Free India is not going to neglect the teaching of religion.

The reader must be aware that the Radhakrishnan Commission's Report on University education devotes a special chapter on religious education in colleges and prescribes a general course for the college students. We hope this book will find a useful place in such studies.

FOREWORD

There are many students and many lovers of the Bible in India. Indeed many Hindus, Muslims and Parsis of the older generation who had been educated in Mission colleges have known or been more familiar with the Bible than even Christians.

The scriptures of every religion hold a special place in the lives of its true followers. But if every one knew a little more about the scriptures of religions other than his own I am sure such knowledge would help to bring about that spirit of tolerance and understanding the lack of which has actually divided and continues to divide man from fellow-man in the very name of religion.

The Bible, apart from the spiritual values with which it is replete, is a veritable gem of English literature. Now that its teaching in Mission schools and colleges will be confined to Christian youth I feel a book such as Mr George is bringing out will serve a very valuable purpose. He has tried faithfully to trace the history of the Jewish race and faith as depicted in the Old Testament and to show how the purpose of this part of the Bible finds its perfect fulfilment in the New Testament or the life and teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The history of the ancient past is told in very readable language and shows how keen a student of the Bible is the author himself. As one reads the story one realizes more than ever the oneness of human nature and how full is this great Book of

lessons for today. How obvious it is that hatred and rivalries and the violence they beget lead nowhere and man can only seek and find salvation in the redeeming power of love! And yet 2,000 years and many more aeons have rolled by and the world still lives under the shadow of war and man continues to rely on weapons of armed might!

I am confident that this book will attract many and I hope, in particular, that the younger generation of India will read the Bible and draw inspiration from the eternal truths contained therein.

New Delhi

AMRIT KAUR

PREFACE

Mahatma Gandhi once said that "it is the duty of every cultured man to read sympathetically scriptures other than his own." Our mutual ignorance of one another's religion has been the fruitful source of much misunderstanding and strife. Especially in India, the land where the great religions of the world mix and mingle, do people need to have at least an elementary knowledge of the religions of those with whom they daily come in contact.

But this is putting the case at its lowest. If culture can be defined as acquaintance with the best that has been thought and said, then no man can be considered cultured if he is unacquainted with the treasures contained in the scriptures of the world's religions. The sense of monopoly with which religious people regarded their scriptures, and even God, is now coming to be regarded as a mark of primitivism. Mankind is slowly entering into its rich, common heritage contained in the scriptures of the world.

The compulsory teaching of the Bible in Christian schools and colleges in India, which were the chief centres of early English education, was one of the adventitious benefits of British rule. But with the passing of the old order and the increasing secularization of education, there is the possibility of the Bible becoming a closed book to Indians. That would be a sad loss. For not only is a knowledge of the Bible an indispensable aid to an appreciation of

English literature, the book is also a great treasure-house of spiritual insight. It contains the thrilling story of one of the most remarkable races of the world and traces the evolution of a religion that has been one of the most dominant influences in world history.

It is the object of this book to tell that story in short compass and also to bring out its spiritual message in a form intelligible to the general reader. The story is told round the great personalities of the Jewish and the Christian religions. In fact, one of the main urges to the writing of this book was the longing to present to the modern man those little-known, intrepid Men of God, the Hebrew prophets, whose demand for social righteousness in the name of the Eternal has come ringing down the ages and has still a message for a world striving for justice and peace.

Besides being an introduction to the Bible, this book is also an anthology. The *Illustrative Readings* at the end of each chapter bring together some of the best passages in the Bible, famous for literary beauty and for spiritual significance. If these readings and the story told together make the Bible a little more intelligible to the general reader, and if his interest is thus stimulated to pursue the study further, then this book will have served some purpose.

The writing of it has been the realization of a long-cherished dream, made possible by my long sojourn in Santiniketan. The book will ever be associated in my mind with the peaceful atmosphere of that place and I wish to express my gratitude to the authorities there for the privilege I had of working in that sacred sanctuary.

The illustrations by my friend Shri Vinayak Masoji of Santiniketan will, I trust, give a special distinction to this book. He is an Indian Christian artist of great originality and great power of expression ; his works deserve to be widely known. The Indian style and setting of these pictures give a foretaste of what Indian art can do to interpret and present Christian themes to this land.

I deem it a great happiness that the name of Rajkumari Amrit Kaur is associated with this book. She found time in the midst of her onerous official duties to read through the book in manuscript and has graciously contributed a Foreword that ought to commend the book to many in India.

My thanks are also due to other friends who encouraged me in the writing of the book, especially to Miss Margaret Barr, Mrs Irene Ray and Mr Horace Alexander. Mrs Irene Ray kindly read carefully through the original manuscript and touched up the language.

The writer is very conscious of the many shortcomings of the book, especially in matters of scholarship. Biblical scholarship is a vaster field of study and research than the uninitiated imagine it to be. I lay no claim to competency in this field, much less to being up-to-date. But the book, being written for the general reader, is not meant for the Biblical scholar. Essentially my testimony to the spiritual significance of a book that has moulded my life, it is also my humble contribution to the buildng up of the *Larger Bible* of the world, to the growing recognition of the elements of worth in all the scriptures of mankind.

Wardha S. K. GEORGE

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THE STORY OF THE BIBLE

CHAPTER I

A PROGRESSIVE REVELATION

The Christian Bible, comprising the Jewish Old Testament and the Christian New Testament, is a wonderful record of a progressive revelation of God to man through a particular channel. The Jews claim for their portion of it and Christians for the whole that it is the unique, the only authentic, Word of God to man. That claim will not be granted by those who have listened to the genuine voice of God through other Scriptures, in other climes and ages, than the Jewish and the Christian. For He is the light that lightens every man, [1] and He has not left Himself without witness [2] in any age or country. Even Islam, with its claim of a unique revelation for itself, grants "to every people its Guide".[3] The Bible itself says that "God is no respector of persons, but that in every nation he that feareth Him and worketh righteousness is acceptable to Him." [4]

Every sacred book, every religion, is in a sense unique. It is the result of a double process, of human search and of divine self-giving. The latter is rightly regarded by every religious soul as the more primal activity. The initiative is God's, though human response thereto is indispensable. The

[1] John 1. 9.

[2] Acts 14. 16 & 17.

[3] The Quran 13. 8.

[4] Acts 10. 34 & 35.

starting point in every revelation is *shruti*, that which is heard. As in the beautiful ancient Jewish story of the child Samuel, God calls the apt soul to listen to His self-revelations, and to those who respond with childlike attention — "Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth[5] — the divine oracles are communicated. But the communication is in every case conditioned by the receptivity of the listener. Hence the distinctiveness, the uniqueness, as well as the limitations, of the different revelations in the various scriptures of each race.

What is unique in the Jewish-Christian revelation is the unravelling of God's purposes in history. The Hebrews were not a philosophically-minded or artistically-gifted people. Their apprehension of Reality was not through science, philosophy or art, as in the case of certain other nations whom one can easily call to mind. Theirs was a moral or ethical approach to the Ultimate Reality. It is not that divine revelations or human apprehensions thereof run along channels unconnected with each other, or that the divine attributes can be parcelled out in complete isolation from one another, that glimpses of the whole are unperceived in any of the authentic revelations. But if in a unique sense to the Greek was vouchsafed the vision of Beauty, and to the Hindu the perception of Ultimate Truth, to the Jew was granted the vision of the Good, and on him were laid the birth-pangs of embodying on earth a perfect pattern of Goodness, which has compelled the loving admiration of the world and which remains even after two thousand years an ideal towards which all

[5] 1 Samuel 3. 9.

mankind is irresistibly drawn. Jesus of Nazareth,[6] Son of Man and Son of God, is the unique treasure the Bible mediates to man.

But this height was reached by no sudden leap. The Bible tells the story of the slow and painful process through which the race was prepared for this unique achievement, this realization of the Divine by man or this incarnation of the Divine in man, whichever way faith finds it most helpful to conceive it. One of the absorbing interests in the study of the Bible is the progress of this revelation. It started from very crude conceptions of God, of a tribal deity warring against the gods of other nations,[7] associated with or even confined to certain sacred spots,[8] demanding and delighting in bloody, even human sacrifices, vengeful and capricious, a god very much in the image of man. It is a far cry from such a god to the Father of Jesus of Nazareth, sending His rain on the just and the unjust, and making His sun rise on the evil and the good, a God whose supreme demand is that His children should be perfect like Himself.[9]

All the varied stages in this ascent are vividly presented and illustrated in this wonderful collection of books, which is really a library of religious literature, ranging over many centuries.[10] The only

6 See Theodore Parker's hymn: O, Thou great Friend to all the sons of men.

7 Illustrative Readings 1.

8 I. R. 2.

9 Matthew 5. 48 & 49.

10 The word *Bible* is derived from *Biblia*, a Greek word meaning books. The composition and compilation of the collection of books known as the Bible cover a period of about eleven centuries, from 1000 B.C. to 100 A.D. There are 39

way to understand the Bible is to study it historically, in the setting in which each book was written, getting to know the persons through whom and the generations to which the varied messages originally came. To the understanding of these the much-maligned critics of the Bible -- the devoted students of "Higher" and "Lower Criticisms"[11] — have contributed a very great deal. Their work is something that has to be undertaken with regard to all the scriptures of the world. Then alone will the way be prepared for a compilation of the *Larger Bible of Mankind*, setting forth the full revelation of God to man by diverse portions and in diverse manners.

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books in the Old Testament and 27 in the New Testament, included in the Authorized Version of the English Bible. This excludes the Apocryphal Books, which cover the period between the Testaments and are now commonly read in churches, as also certain books of very doubtful authenticity, which are however accepted by certain churches. The Canon of the O. T. was finally fixed by a council of Jewish rabbis at Jamnia about 90 A. D. and that of N. T. by the council of Chalcedon in 450 A.D.

[11] These terms have no reference whatsoever, as is commonly supposed, to the degree of their destructiveness. They are derived from the analogy of the investigation of the course of a river, Higher Criticism dealing with the problems of the sources, origin, date, authorship, etc. of the books and Lower Criticism with the preservation and variations of their texts.

Illustrative Readings

1. *The Song of Deborah* (Judges 5.—One of the oldest pieces of Bible literature).

(A Song in praise of Israel's War-God)

Hear, O ye kings; give ear, O ye princes;
I, even I, will sing unto the Lord;
I will sing praise to the Lord, the God of Israel.
Lord, when thou wentest forth out of Seir,
When thou marchedst out of the field of Edom,
The earth trembled, the heavens also dropped;
Yea, the clouds dropped water.
The mountains flowed down at the presence of the Lord, the God of Israel,
Even yon Sinai, at the presence of the Lord, the God of Israel.
Awake, awake, Deborah:
Awake, awake, utter a song;
Arise, Barak, and lead thy captivity captive, thou son of Abinoam.
Blessed above women shall Jael be,[1]
The wife of Heber, the Kenite,
Blessed shall she be above women in the tent.
He asked water, and she gave him milk;
She brought him butter in a lordly dish.
She put her hand to the nail,
And her right hand to the workman's hammer;
And with a hammer she smote Sisera, she smote through his head;
Yea, she pierced and struck through his temples.
At her feet he bowed, he fell, he lay:
At her feet he bowed, he fell:
Where he bowed, there he fell down dead.
So let all thine enemies perish, O Lord:
But let them that love him be as the sun when he goeth forth in his might.

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[1] Jael had really acted treacherously, betraying an enemy who had trusted her. But it is her devotion to the cause of the war-god that is extolled.

2. *Naaman, the Syrian, healed of his leprosy by the God of Israel, asks for a cart-load of Israelitish earth to worship Yahweh upon* [2] (2 Kings 5. 14-17).

Then he went down, and dipped himself seven times in Jordan, according to the saying of the man of God: and his flesh came again like unto the flesh of a little child, and he was clean. And he returned to the man of God, he and all his company, and came and stood before him: and he said, Behold now, I know that there is no God in all the earth, but in Israel: now therefore I pray thee, take a present of thy servant. But he said, As the Lord liveth, before whom I stand, I will receive none. And he urged him to take it; but he refused. And Naaman said, If not, yet I pray thee let there be given to thy servant two mules' burden of earth; for thy servant will henceforth offer neither burnt offering nor sacrifice unto other gods, but unto the Lord.[2]

3. *True Worship* (Micah 6. 6-8).

Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God? shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?

4. *The One God of all the universe, beyond human conception, yet of tender mercy* (Isaiah 40. 21-31).

Have ye not known? have ye not heard? hath it not been told you from the beginning? have ye not understood from the foundations of the earth? It is he that sitteth upon the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers;

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[2] Many passages in O. T. reflected this belief in a localized deity, to be worshipped in some particular land or locality only. cf. David's complaint to Saul that he was driving him out of his homeland and "bidding me, Go, serve other gods" 1 Samuel 26. 25.

that stretcheth out the heavens as a curtain, and spreadeth them out as a tent to dwell in: and that bringeth princes to nothing; he maketh the judges of the earth as vanity.—To whom then will ye liken me, that I should be equal to him? saith the Holy One. Lift up your eyes on high, and see who hath created these, that bringeth out their host by number; he calleth them all by name; by the greatness of his might, and for that he is strong in power, not one is lacking. Why sayest thou, O Jacob, and speakest, O Israel, My way is hid from the Lord, and my judgement is passed away from my God? Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard? the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary; there is no searching of his understanding. He giveth power to the faint; and to him that hath no might he increaseth strength. Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall: but they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint.

5. *The God who is Spirit* (John 4. 19-24).

The woman saith unto him, Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet. Our fathers worshipped in this mountain; and ye say that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship. Jesus saith unto her, Woman, believe me, the hour cometh when neither in this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, shall ye worship the Father. The hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and truth: for such doth the Father seek to be his worshippers. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship in spirit and in truth.

CHPATER II

IN THE BEGINNING GOD

The Bible opens with answers to the questions which every child of the human race has earnestly and often asked: How were we made? How were all things made? The Biblical answer is characteristically expressed in its opening words: In the beginning God ...... [1]

It is characteristic because the Bible throughout, from beginning to end, tells of a personal God, a God who created man in His own image, redeemed him from his fallen condition, and finally will restore all things to their primal perfection, when all things shall be in subjection to Him, "that God may be all in all". [2]

It is now an accepted conclusion of Biblical scholarship that in the Bible, especially in its early books which tell of the beginnings of things and the early history of the Jewish people, we have, not one continuous, uniform narrative, but several strands of writing, executed at different times, from varying points of view, by many writers, pieced together without regard to repetition or inconsistencies. Scholars distinguish between four different strands of writing in the so-called Mosaic books of the Bible, which they designate as J. E. D.

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[1] Genesis 1. 1.

[2] 1 Corinthians 15. 28.

& P.,[3] each of which they can confidently ascribe to its particular date and school of writing. Thus we have in the first chapters of Genesis not one but two accounts of Creation and two accounts of the Flood. But such considerations regarding divergent authorship and consequent inconsistencies need not concern us in telling the story of the Bible as it interests the general reader.

Nor need we concern ourselves with the problem of the dates and sources of the different books, indispensable as they are to a scholarly study of the Bible, throwing valuable light on the common origins of many ancient articles of faith and codes of morality. Babylonian myths, for instance, lie behind the Biblical stories of Creation and the Flood, and parallels between them are many. The Biblical accounts of these, as well as the whole trend of religious development in the Bible, stand out as unique, not because of their originality, but because of their discriminating selectiveness and their integration round the dominant idea of the One God, beside whom there is none other.

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[3] J. & E. stand for the names of God, Jehovah or Yahweh and Elohim, which are consistently used in the two earliest strata of the narratives. D. stands for a later prophetic editor in the 7th Cent. B.C. who most probably introduced the book of Deuteronomy into the collection, while P. stands for the priestly compiler who in the 5th century touched up the whole, but left the earlier narratives unaltered in the manner of ancient compilers. Readers interested in these matters should study the two accounts of the creation (Gen. 1 & 2) and of the Flood (Gen. 6 & 7). The question assumes greater importance when we come to study the differences and inconsistencies in the records of the life of Christ.

Controversy raged bitterly between Christian apologists and scientists in nineteenth century Europe when science established the fact of evolution in the origin and development of the living species on earth. The battle is not yet rounded off, for every new astronomical discovery and every new insight man attains into the unalterable laws of nature are wrongly held by advocates of the faith to undermine the foundations of Christian belief. But this is wrongly to understand the character and purpose of the Biblical narratives. They do not give scientific answers to the questions as to the *how* and *when* of Creation; their purpose is to provide the far more significant religious answers to questions as to the *why* and *wherefore*, the meaning and purpose of Creation, questions on which science has so far little authentic to say. Truth in the Bible is not scientific, but poetic and religious.

So regarded, the Biblical story of Creation is a superb myth, enshrining great and valuable lessons for man. It depicts all things as created by the fiat of an Almighty Creator, who rejoices in His creation, finding it all good. In majestic order at His word all things in heaven and on earth come into being: the lights in the firmament, the fish of the sea, the fowls of the air and the living creatures on the land. Finally comes the crown of all creation, man in God's own image, to be the lord of all creation and the companion of his Maker. "And God saw everything that He had made, and behold it was very good."[4]

But this hymn of creation is only a prologue to the main theme of the book which is that of the

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[4] I. R. 6.

redemption of man. For this earth, which was created all perfect, was soon marred by the sin of man. The fact of evil, the explanation of its origin and, even more, the way to overcome it, is the main concern of religion. The Biblical solution of the problem is found in the story of the Fall of man and his subsequent redemption.[5]

The magnificent story of the temptation and fall of man has again the beauty and significance of poetry and not of scientific veracity. The story says that God had set the first man and woman, Adam and Eve, in a beautiful garden where they had nothing to do but to live at ease, eating of the fruits of the trees of the garden. But there was one tree set in the midst of the garden, the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, the fruit of which they were forbidden to eat on pain of death. But the serpent, subtlest of all the creatures of the earth, whom later theology and notably the poet Milton has identified with Satan, tempted the woman to taste the forbidden fruit

> "whose mortal taste
> Brought death into the world, and all our woe,
> With loss of Eden, till one greater Man
> Restore us, and regain the blissful seat."[6]

The man and the woman are pictured as suddenly becoming conscious of their nakedness and hiding themselves from the presence of God, whose companionship they had till then freely enjoyed. This awakening of self-consciousness, thus poetically described, is certainly a stage in human development

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5 I. R. 7.

6 Milton: *Paradise Lost*, Book I, 2-5.

and a fact of spiritual evolution. It was both a fall and a rise in the scale of spiritual evolution, for through it man achieved the possibility of realizing conscious goodness, while it also involved the consequence of a possible sinking below the animal level through conscious evil-doing.

The Fall and its consequences are presented as accounting for all the evil in the world. Thorns and thistles spring up on the surface of the earth giving rise to the necessity of hard labour, the primal curse of having to eat bread by the sweat of his brow having been pronounced upon man after his fall. To woman, who was the original offender, is allotted subservience to man and the punishment of painful childbirth. The serpent, the Tempter, is condemned to crawl upon its belly and to suffer the perpetual malice of the woman's descendants. Above all came the doom of death on man and on all creation. To the primitive mind, reflected in this narrative, this was a satisfying explanation of the fact of evil in the world, of man's hard lot in a world of suffering and death. But the enlightened modern mind, under the guidance of the same God who inspired these early speculations, has come to understand these facts better, to accept the conditions of earthly existence as the necessary pangs for bringing to birth souls capable of "becoming like the gods", to see this world with all its travails as "a vale of soul-making".

Sin having entered the world the drama moves apace. Later Jewish and Christian theology derives the taint in human nature, its tendency to choose evil and to reject the good, from this original sin of the first parents. On this is built the theory of the total depravity of man, and of his redemption by a second

Adam, the Man from above, born without this original taint. But this is later theory. The story as it is told is more true to the facts of human nature. Driven from the Garden of Eden the first parents reproduced their kind; but alas, their eldest son committed the first act of murder, lifting his hand against his own brother. Man and his evil thus multiplied themselves till, as the anthropomorphic narrative has it, "it repented Yahweh that He had made man" and He sent a flood upon the earth to destroy His creation, preserving only one faithful household, that of Noah, and specimens of all varieties of plant and animal life to replenish the earth later.

The story of the Flood also has the beauty of poetry and not of literal fact. Traditions about a great flood that destroyed the earth are common to primitive peoples all over the world. The Biblical narrative has its close parallels with Babylonian flood stories. As in the account of the Creation, there are two versions of the Flood in the Bible, dovetailed together regardless of inconsistencies. But in spite of divergent details they agree in the main purpose of the story. The Flood is presented as God's punishment upon man for violations of the moral law. But God is also depicted as merciful, having pity on man and willing to forgive. Noah alone is found faithful; so he and his family are preserved. And they are given a sign in the heavens that never again will God thus destroy His creation by flood. The rainbow in the sky was to the ancient Hebrews the sign of Yahweh's covenant with man on this issue.

Then follows another interesting story, giving the primitive man's explanation of the bewildering variety of races and languages upon earth. This is again presented as due to a curse of God or of the gods — for it is the plural form of the word for deity that is used here as in some other parts of the narrative — who were jealous of man's presumptuous ways. The story is that after the experience of the flood the descendants of Noah assembled together and started building a tower, reaching up to the heavens, to serve them as an ark of refuge in case of another flood. But the jealous gods could not brook this presumption and so came down and confounded their speech so that they could not understand one another! The Tower of Babel (confusion) was thus abandoned half-built, the prototype of many later unsuccessful efforts at united action among men.

6. *The Story of Creation* (Genesis 1).

In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. And the earth was waste and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep; and the spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters. And God said, Let there be light; and there was light. And God saw the light, that it was good; and God divided the light from the darkness. And God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, one day.

And God said, Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters. And God made the firmament, and divided the waters which were under the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament; and it was so. And God called the firmament Heaven. And there was evening and there was morning, a second day.

And God said, Let the waters under the heaven be gathered together unto one place, and let the dry land appear; and it was so. And God called the dry land Earth; and the gathering together of the waters called he Seas; and God saw that it was good. And God said, Let the earth put forth grass, herb yielding seed, and fruit tree bearing fruit after its kind, wherein is the seed thereof, upon the earth; and it was so. And the earth brought forth grass, herb yielding seed after his kind, and tree bearing fruit, wherein is the seed thereof, after its kind; and God saw that it was good. And there was evening and there was morning, a third day.

And God said, Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days and years; and let them be for lights in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth; and it was so. And God made the two great lights; the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night; he made the stars also. And God set them in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth, and to rule over the day and over the night, and to divide the light

from the darkness; and God saw that it was good. And there was evening and there was morning, a fourth day.

And God said, Let the waters bring forth abundantly the moving creature that hath life, and let fowl fly above the earth in the open firmament of heaven. And God created the great sea-monsters, and every living creature that moveth, which the waters brought forth abundantly, after their kinds, and every winged fowl after its kind; and God saw that it was good. And God blessed them, saying, Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the waters in the seas, and let fowl multiply in the earth. And there was evening and there was morning, a fifth day.

And God said, Let the earth bring forth the living creature after its kind, cattle, and creeping thing, and beast of the earth after its kind: and it was so. And God made the beast of the earth after its kind, and the cattle after their kind, and every thing that creepeth upon the ground after its kind; and God saw that it was good. And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. And God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them. And God blessed them; and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth. And God said, Behold, I have given you every herb yielding seed, which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree in which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed; to you it shall be for meat; and to every beast of the earth, and to every fowl of the air, and to every thing that creepeth upon the earth, wherein there is life, I have given every green herb for meat; and it was so. And God saw every-thing that he had made, and, behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.

7. *The Fall of Man* (Genesis 3. 1-19).

Now the serpent was more subtle than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of any tree of the garden? And the woman said unto the serpent, Of the fruit

of the trees of the garden we may eat: but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die. And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die; for God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as God, knowing good and evil. And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat; and she gave also unto her husband with her, and he did eat. And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons. And they heard the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day; and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God amongst the trees of the garden. And the Lord God called unto the man, and said unto him, Where art thou? And he said, I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself. And he said, Who told thee that thou wast naked? Hast thou eaten of the tree whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldst not eat? And the man said, The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat. And the Lord God said unto the woman, What is this thou hast done? And the woman said, The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat. And the Lord God said unto the serpent, Because thou hast done this, cursed art thou above all cattle, and above every beast of the field; upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life: and I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed: it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel. Unto the woman he said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee. And unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it; cursed is the ground for thy sake; in toil shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life; thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field; in the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return

unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken; for dust thou art, and unto dust shall thou return.

8. *The Tower of Babel* (Genesis 11. 1-9).

And the whole earth was of one language and of one speech. And it came to pass, as they journeyed east, that they found a plain in the land of Shinar; and they dwelt there. And they said one to another, Go to, let us make brick, and burn them thoroughly. And they had brick for stone, and slime had they for mortar. And they said, Go to, let us build a city, and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven, and let us make us a name; lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth. And the Lord came down to see the city and the tower, which the children of men builded. And the Lord said, Behold, they are one people and they have all one language; and this is what they begin to do; and now nothing will be withholden from them, which they purpose to do. Go to, let us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech. So the Lord scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth: and they left off to build the city. Therefore was the name of it called Babel; because the Lord did there confound the language of all the earth.

CHAPTER III

THE BIRTH OF A NATION

The Call of Abraham, The Exodus and Moses, the Law-Giver

The stories so far told were common to the Semitic races and form only a prelude to the special traditions pertaining to the Jewish people. The long and chequered career of this remarkable people began with the call of Abraham, their progenitor, from Ur of the Chaldees, the land of his nativity in Mesopotamia. He has become the archetype of all the pioneering adventurers of humanity, the Father of the Faithful, "going out not knowing whither he went".[1] The call to him from Yahweh was to "Go forth from thy country and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, to the land that I will show thee, that I may make of thee a great nation; and I will surely bless thee and make thy name great, so that thou shalt be a blessing."[2] And Abraham obeyed and appropriated by faith this divine promise, to which his descendants have desperately clung through centuries of repeated captivity and sojourn in foreign lands; and still, in the face of tremendous odds, do they cling to the promise that Palestine shall be the land of Abraham's children.

Abraham himself lived as a stranger and a sojourner in the land, even having to buy a plot of land to bury his wife, Sarah. Before she died she

1 Hebrews 11.8.
2 Genesis 12.1 & 2.

had in her old age born him a son, Isaac, the son of promise. The portrait of Abraham, though greatly idealized, still shows many features characteristic of the time and country in which he lived. Twice we read of his telling the same lie that Sarah his wife was his sister in order to save his own life. When his wife was childless, he went, with the consent of his wife, to his servant-maid for the sake of a child and yet when the wife herself bore him a son he yielded to her jealousy and sent the servant-maid and her son out into the world unprotected. His conception of God was that of his age and clime. His God is specially associated with groves and trees. In the land of Canaan he dwelt by the Oaks of Mamre, where many manifestations of Yahweh were given to him and where he built an altar to his God. Even now in Palestine there are many trees which are regarded as sacred. Further, Abraham's God was one who demanded human sacrifices. One of the most moving stories in the Old Testament tells how Abraham felt it laid upon him by his God to sacrifice his only son, the son of promise, born in his old age. But the story really indicates the beginning of the way in which under the leading hand of their God the children of Israel slowly learned the lesson that the God of all the earth does not delight in, or demand, sacrifices, human or animal.[3] Abraham's experience taught him that what counts with God is not the sacrifice itself, but the readiness to offer one's utmost at the altar of God. He was spared the costly sacrifice he was prepared to make, a ram being divinely provided instead of the son he had

[3] See I. R. 9.

laid ready on the altar. A greater than Abraham completed and confirmed the lesson, which successive generations of Hebrew prophets had learned through reflection on God's dealings with their nation. Quoting one of them Jesus said: "Go and learn what this means: I desire mercy and not sacrifice".[4]

Abraham died full of years, not having realized the promise made to him, but leaving a rich inheritance of faith to his descendants. Isaac, his son, is a shadowy figure among the progenitors of Israel, merely forming a link in the chain of descent. But not so the next patriarch, Jacob, who, according to a strange but significant legend, won for himself the title Israel (Struggler with God), by struggling all night with an unknown antagonist who turned out to be God himself.[5]

These early stories are also of interest as providing explanations of ancient place-names and of the origins of the feuds and friendships between the races surrounding the Jews in Canaan. Thus *Beer-lahai-roi*, (Well of the living One who seeth me) received its name from the appearance of Yahweh to Hagar, the servant maid whom Abraham had turned out of his house. *Bethel* (House of God) was the place where Jacob had the vision of the ladder set up between heaven and earth. The personalities in the stories, too, are often types and representatives of the nations that were believed to have sprung from them, though some of them are portrayed with great vividness and have pronounced individual

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[4] Matt. 9.13 and 6.6.
[5] Genesis 32.24-28.

traits. Thus Ishmael, the promise regarding whom was that

"He shall be like a wild ass,
His hand against everyman's
And everyman's hand against him;
And he shall dwell over against all his kinsmen"[6]

is the type and representative of the wandering Arabs, whose progenitor he was believed to be. Even more vivid is the portrayal of the long-standing feud between the kindred races of the Jews and the Edomites, which is presented as starting in the mother's womb where the twins, Esau and Jacob, struggled for precedence. Jacob is said to have been born holding on the heel of the elder Esau, and the feud ended only when Jacob supplanted Esau in his paternal inheritance, thus typifying the ultimate conquest of Edom by Israel.

These narratives reach their climax in literary charm, dramatic effectiveness and moral appeal, in the Joseph stories. Joseph, the favourite son of Jacob, was sold as a slave for a paltry sum by his jealous brothers and sent to Egypt, but there rose to the highest eminence because of his sterling character....and because "God was with him", proving in the end to be the saviour of his people. He appeared to later Christian apologists to be a prototype of the Christ, despised and rejected by his own people but, by his sufferings, redeeming his nation and the world. Joseph's story has remarkable parallels in Egyptian history, down even to details like the golden collar with which he was decorated

[6] Genesis 16.12.

for his interpretation of Pharaoh's dream.[7] The Tell-el-Amarna letters speak of more than one Semite raised to the highest dignity in Egypt, particularly of one *Yanhamu*, who had charge of the magazines of food in the delta area, in the days of Amenhotep III. Some scholars have even identified Joseph with Yanhamu, but this does not fit in with other facts which indicate a much earlier date for the Joseph of the Bible.

Dates are yet a matter of speculation for this period of Jewish history and there is much controversy among Egyptologists regarding them, some placing the Joseph episode during the reign of the Hyksos or Shepherd Kings of Egypt, who, being themselves Semites, can naturally be supposed to have welcomed the sojourn of the Hebrews in Egypt. Others would place it during the period of the XVIII dynasty, two later kings of this dynasty, Amenhotep III & IV, pursued a liberal policy towards foreigners. Modern scholarship prefers the earlier date according to which Joseph's ascendancy and the settlement of the Hebrews in Goshen, the region that was assigned to them, took place early in the rule of the Hyksos dynasty, between 1800 and 1700 B.C. The turn in the fortunes of the Hebrews came with the expulsion from Egypt of their kinsmen, the Shepherd Kings, in 1580 B.C. "The Pharaoh who knew not Joseph" might have been Ahmes (1580-1557 B.C.), under whom the oppression began, reaching its climax under Thotmes III (1501-1448). Archaeological discoveries, including the famous Karnak Inscription of Thotmes III (1479), confirm the

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[7] Genesis 41.42.

Biblical picture of the cruel Pharaoh who built great cities with forced labour, denying the slaves even straw with which to bind the bricks. His successor, Amenhotep II (1448-1420), must have been the Pharaoh of the Exodus during whose reign, the inscriptions show, the suzerainty of Egypt declined, providing the Hebrew slaves with an opportunity to escape. Moses was an ancient Gandhi, inspiring and leading a political revolt in the strength of the conviction that God demanded freedom for his people. If Abraham was the progenitor of the race, Moses was the maker of the nation. Above all he was its law-giver, and the one to whose guidance the nation looked ever afterwards. A masterful leader of men, he had been called to political leadership, if ever man was, by his God. It was the oppression of his people in Egypt that stirred him to activity. The beautiful idyll of his early career tells how he was cast away as a child of three months upon the waters of the Nile, after an unavailing effort by his parents to protect him in other ways from the cruel demand of Pharaoh that every Hebrew male child should be killed, and how he was rescued by the Pharaoh's daughter and brought up in the royal palace. But when he grew to manhood he chose to stand by his people in their affiiction, rather than enjoy the pleasures of the Egyptian palace. He had to flee from the country because he participated in a fight between an Egyptian and a Hebrew in which he slew the Egyptian. Years later, in the land of his exile, his God appeared to him in a flaming vision, a Burning Bush,[8] and bade him to go and deliver His

[8] I. R. 10.

people from their oppression in Egypt. To the oppressed of all nations and climes, to the American Negro and other coloured races of the earth still groaning under the heels of their oppressors, the story of Israel's deliverance under Moses has been a clarion call to revolt and a message of hope. Moses went in the power of his God to rouse a people, oppressed beyond endurance, yet hugging their chains, and to lead them with infinite patience out of captivity to freedom. It is a thrilling story, heightened no doubt in the telling by supernatural interpretations of natural occurrences, so common in ancient narratives. Such is the account of the Ten Plagues of Egypt, a striking succession of calamities which finally overcame the resistance of Pharaoh and of the Egyptians to the Hebrew demand for freedom.

Yet no sooner were the slaves gone than Pharaoh repented of his folly and followed after them to destroy or bring them back. Then it was that the great miracle, or what the Jews for ever after regard as a miracle, the sign and seal of their choice by Yahweh, occurred. The ancient story has it that the waters of the Red Sea parted, enabling the Jews to cross in safety, but returned to swallow up the pursuing Egyptians. What really happened might have been similar to events that have been recorded in recent times. Probably the shallow waters of the Sea of Reeds (off the Red Sea) were driven back by a timely wind that allowed a safe passage to the fugitives, their pursuers arriving too late to effect the crossing. (Modern parallels are those of the waters of the Putrid Sea driven back by a wind, allowing a Russian army to cross it dryfoot to capture Crimea

in 1738 A.D. and of Lake Menzaleh drying up through the action of a strong wind as recorded by Major General Tulloch in the *Journal of the Victorian Institute*, Vol. 28). This great deliverance was the theme of many a song of praise[9] and the unmistakable proof to the nation of its election as God's people among all the nations of the world.

The immediate destination of the exiles was the sacred mountain of Sinai, where God had appeared to their leader, setting him to his task of delivering his people from captivity. Moses, under divine guidance, wanted to bind the people to a Covenant with Yahweh, a practice prevalent in Semitic life in establishing unbreakable relations between individuals or tribes or between man and God. They seem to have followed the caravan route across the Wilderness of Paran to Mount Sinai on the southern spurs of Mount Seir.

There are three distinct accounts of the revelation of Yahweh on the holy mountain. All three agree in depicting it as something that struck terror into the hearts of the assembled multitude. The scene in all its accounts is pregnant with the sense of awe, the *mysterium tremendum*, of the Divine. Yahweh was yet a God who spoke in thunder and lightning. The still small voice in which He was to speak and still speaks to the listening soul represents a much later stage in human apprehension of the Divine. Moses alone ventures to ascend the holy mountain. And there amidst thunder and lightning, the whole mountain quaking, were communicated to him the Divine Oracles, the terms of the Covenant that

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[9] I. R. 11.

Yahweh was entering into with His people. According to one narrative Moses inscribes the Ten Commandments on two tablets of stone that he had prepared; according to another they were handed over to him inscribed by the finger of Yahweh himself.

Two distinct forms of the Decalogue [10] are also given, the familiar one in Exodus 20, and an earlier and more distinctly ceremonial one in Exodus 34. The latter certainly reflects an earlier stage in religious consciousness, with the distinctions between the ethical and the ceremonial still hazy, and must have been the original of the Law communicated through Moses. It puts the prohibition against cooking a kid in its mother's milk alongside the injunction to worship no other God than Yahweh! It was in keeping with ancient literary practice and code of authorship to attribute to the same legendary figure all later additions and modifications of the original writing which may have come from him. Thus Moses is believed to be the author of all the five books of Jewish Law in the Old Testament, although books like Deuteronomy clearly reflect a much later development of Jewish thought and practice. Strangely enough, the last of the books attributed to him tells the story of his own death! But however crude the beginnings, the Ten Commandments of the Hebrews represent a landmark in mankind's ethical progress and they have provided the basis for all morality in the countries of the Western world which have drawn inspiration from this remarkable race and their remarkable book. Jesus was only fulfilling the Law,

10 I. R. 12.

carrying on the work of clarification and simplification to its farthest limit, when he summed up the Ten Commandments into two — the first to "love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength"; and the second equal to it, to "love thy neighbour as thyself."[11] It is interesting to observe that both these commandments in their simplified form appear in different books of the Pentateuch, the originality of Jesus consisting in linking the two together as of equal importance.[12]

The Covenant having been effected, and the Tables of the Law placed in an Ark which was made according to the pattern shown to Moses on the Mount (the Ark became to the Jews the symbol of Yahweh's presence with them), the people started on their long trek through the wilderness. The narrative presents this forty years' wandering as a punishment due to the failure of the people to trust their God to give them victory in an immediate and direct assault upon the promised land. The story has it that out of twelve representatives sent out to spy the land only two counselled immediate advance, the others discouraging the people by their report of the might of their adversaries. And the people listened to the advice of the ten. Actually the record might reflect the failure of an attempt from the south and the necessity forced upon the exiles to travel round the Dead Sea in order to approach the land of their destiny from the East, which they finally did successfully. It may be that during the long wandering

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[11] Mark 12. 28-31.

[12] Deuteronomy 6. 4 & 5;+Leviticus 19. 18.

of forty years the whole generation of those who came out from Egypt perished, except, as the narrative says, the two faithful spies, Caleb and Joshua.

Even Moses, the great leader, was not privileged to enter the Promised Land. Never was leader more valorous than he ; and perhaps none had a more difficult people to lead. Roused and led out of captivity, full often did they long to return to " the flesh-pots of Egypt ". Miraculously led and fed though they believed themselves to be — the timely fall of mannah and quails, the natural food of the desert, seemed to them another sign of Yahweh's providential care for them — they perpetually murmured against the leader who was bearing their burden all the time. Time and again did he have to meet with opposition from them, sometimes even from his closest associates, his brother Aaron and sister Miriam. But on every such occasion he was vindicated by his God. Even Yahweh is presented at times as losing patience with His people, as once when He offered to blot them all out and make from Moses a great nation. Nowhere does Moses rise to greater grandeur than when he turns down what seemed to him a divine offer and intercedes for his people — " if thou wilt, forgive their sin — if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of the book which thou hast written ".[13] There is only one recorded instance of his having exceeded his commission and presumed to be himself the giver and not the mere instrument of God's gifts, when he lost patience with his murmurring people and asked whether *he* should bring them water out

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[13] Exodus 32. 32.

of the rock.[14] For this one offence, presumably, he was denied the right of entry into the promised land. He was only allowed to catch a distant glimpse, *a Pisgah sight*, of the land from a mountain overlooking it. And he remains for all time the type of a divinely-appointed leader of men, set a very earthly task to do, and persisting in it in spite of discouragements and finally even surrendering the satisfaction of seeing the fruits of his labours. No wonder that the Messiah of Jewish expectation was " a prophet like unto Moses ". According to the ancient narrative his end was mysterious. He went up into a mountain to commune with his God, and his God took him ; for not even the place of his burial was known to his followers.[15]

[14] Numbers 20. 10.
[15] Deuteronomy 34. 5 & 6.

9. *The Sacrifice of Isaac* (Genesis 22. 1-18).

And it came to pass after these things, that God did prove Abraham, and said unto him, Abraham; and he said, Here am I. And he said, Take now thy son, thine only son, whom thou lovest, even Isaac, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of. And Abraham arose early in the morning, and saddled his ass, and took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son; and he clave the wood for the burnt offering, and rose up, and went unto the place of which God had told him. On the third day Abraham lifted up his eyes, and saw the place afar off. And Abraham said unto his young men, Abide ye here with the ass, and I and the lad will go yonder; and we will worship, and come again to you. And Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering, and laid it upon Isaac his son; and he took in his hand the fire and the knife; and they went both of them together. And Isaac spake unto Abraham his father, and said, My father; and he said, Here am I, my son. And he said, Behold, the fire and the wood; but where is the lamb for a burnt offering? And Abraham said, God will provide himself the lamb for a burnt offering, my son; so they went both of them together. And they came to the place which God had told him of; and Abraham built the altar there, and laid the wood in order, and bound Isaac his son, and laid him on the altar, upon the wood. And Abraham stretched forth his hand, and took the knife to slay his son. And the angel of the Lord called unto him out of heaven, and said, Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou anything unto him; for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son, from me. And Abraham lifted up his eyes, and looked, and behold, behind him a ram caught in the thicket by his horns; and Abraham went and took the ram, and offered him up for a burnt offering in the stead of his son. And Abraham called the name of that place Jehovah-jireh; as it is said to this day, In the mount of the Lord it shall be provided. And the angel of the Lord called unto Abraham a second time out of heaven, and said, By myself have I sworn, saith the Lord, because thou hast

done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son; that in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies; and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice.

10. *The Call of Moses: The Burning Bush* (Exodus 3. 1-10).

Now Moses was keeping the flock of Jethro, his father in law, the priest of Midian; and he led the flock to the back of the wilderness, and came to the mountain of God, unto Horeb. And the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush; and he looked, and, behold, the bush burned with fire, and the bush was not consumed. And Moses said, I will turn aside now, and see this great sight, why the bush is not burnt. And when the Lord saw that he turned aside to see, God called unto him out of the midst of the bush, and said, Moses, Moses. And he said, Here am I. And he said, Draw not nigh hither; put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground. Moreover he said, I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. And Moses hid his face; for he was afraid to look upon God. And the Lord said, I have surely seen the affliction of my people which are in Egypt, and have heard their cry by reason of their taskmasters; for I know their sorrows; and I am come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land unto a good land and a large, unto a land flowing with milk and honey; unto the place of the Canaanite, and the Hittite, and the Amorite, and the Perizite, and the Hivite, and the Jebusite. And now, behold, the cry of the children of Israel is come unto me; moreover I have seen the oppression wherewith the Egyptians oppress them. Come now therefore, and I will send thee unto, Pharaoh, that thou mayest bring forth my people the children of Israel out of Egypt.

11. *The Song of Deliverance* (Exodus 15. 1-11).

Then sang Moses and the children of Israel this song unto the Lord and spake, saying,

I will sing unto the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously:
The horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea.
The Lord is my strength and song,
And he is become my salvation:
This is my God, and I will praise him;
My father's God, and I will exalt him.
The Lord is a man of war:
The Lord is his name.
Pharaoh's chariots and his host hath he cast into the sea:
And his chosen captains are sunk in the Red Sea.
The deeps cover them:
They went down into the depths like a stone.
Thy right hand, O Lord, is glorious in power,
Thy right hand, O Lord, dasheth in pieces the enemy.
And in the greatness of thine excellency thou overthrowest
them that rise up against thee:
Thou sendest forth thy wrath, it consumeth them as
stubble.
And with the blast of thy nostrils the waters were piled up,
The floods stood upright as an heap;
The deeps were congealed in the heart of the sea.
The enemy said,
I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil:
My lust shall be satisfied upon them;
I will draw my sword, my hand shall destroy them.
Thou didst blow with thy wind, the sea covered them:
They sank as lead in the mighty waters.
Who is like unto thee, O Lord, among the gods?
Who is like thee, glorious in holiness,
Fearful in praises, doing wonders?

12A. *The Ten Commandments* (Exodus 20. 1-17).

And God spake all these words, saying,

I am the Lord thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt out of the house of bondage. Thou shalt have none other gods before me.

Thou shalt not make unto thee a graven image, nor the likeness of any form that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; thou shalt not bow down thyself unto them, nor serve them; for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the

fathers upon the children, upon the third and upon the fourth generation of them that hate me; and showing mercy unto thousands of them that love me and keep my commandments.

Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain; for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain.

Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work; but the seventh day is a sabbath unto the Lord thy God; in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates; for in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day; wherefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it.

Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee.

Thou shalt do no murder.

Thou shalt not commit adultery.

Thou shalt not steal.

Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour.

Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor anything that is thy neighbour's.

12B. *Jesus' Summing up of the Commandments* (Mark 12. 28-31).

And one of the scribes came and heard them questioning together, and knowing that he had answered them well, asked him, What commandment is the first of all? Jesus answered, The first is, Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God, the Lord is one; and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength. The second is this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these.

CHAPTER IV

CONQUEST AND SETTLEMENT

Joshua and the Judges

Recent archaeological discoveries in Palestine and Egypt remarkably confirm the Biblical records and chronology of the Exodus and of the settlement of the Hebrews in Palestine. According to the latest research, the Exodus from Egypt took place about 1447 B.C., during the reign of Pharaoh Amenhotep II (1448-1420) ; and the first assault on Canaan across the Jordan about 1400 B.C., allowing for the traditional forty years' wandering in the wilderness. The Tell-el-Amarna letters[1] depict a state of affairs in Palestine very favourable to an invader because of the indifference of the suzerain Egyptian power, and actually mention the Hebrews, calling them *Habiru,* who "are now capturing the fortresses of the Pharaoh, and have wasted all the territory of the king". The frenzied appeals for help fell on deaf ears. Amenhotep the Magnificent was engrossed in making artificial lakes, in lion-hunts and bull-fights, while his successor, Akhnaton (1375-1358 B.C.), was

[1] So called because they were discovered in a heap of rubbish by a woman in 1887 in the town of Tell-el-Amarna on the Upper Nile. They are a collection of clay tablets, written in Babylonian cuneiform letters, being despatches sent by the chieftains of Canaan to their overlords, the Pharaohs of Egypt, between the years 1380 and 1360 B. C., beseeching their help against the invaders of the land, among whom were the *Habiru* from across the Jordan.

one born centuries ahead of his time, preaching a religion of peace in an age of turbulence. The weakness or apathy of Egypt gave the Hebrews just the required chance to effect their entry into the land which they believed their God had promised to their forefathers.

As in the earlier narratives of the Creation and of the Flood there are more than one strand in the traditions recorded in the Books of Joshua and Judges regarding the conquest and settlement in the land by the Hebrews. The later version reflects the idealized view that the conquest was accomplished swiftly, within seven years, and the land divided by lot among the tribes of Israel. But the earlier strands, which can easily be recognized, make it clear that the conquest was never complete, but proceeded by slow stages with many reverses and that the original inhabitants were never wholly driven out from the land. Actually there is evidence to corroborate the estimate of 480 years assigned by Biblical historians for the period from the Exodus to the building of Solomon's temple.

The work of Moses was taken up by one trained by the great leader. To Joshua, the son of Nun, the promise was given by Yahweh that "as I was with Moses, so will I be with thee ; I will not fail thee nor forsake thee. Be strong and of a good courage : for thou shalt cause this people to inherit the land which I sware unto their fathers to give them.[2] His assumption of leadership was early signalized by an event which the Hebrews believed to be as miraculous as their deliverance at the Red Sea. This

[2] Joshua 1. & 6.

was the parting of the waters of the Jordan, as the feet of the priests who bore the Ark of Yahweh touched the waters at the bidding of Joshua. Actually what happened must have been similar to an incident reported in 1927 when a landslide upstream held up the waters of the Jordan for twenty four hours.

Thus assured again of Yahweh's continued presence with them the children of Israel advanced against their first objective, the city of Jericho. The city seems to have been a compact fortress, with a total area of not more than what would be covered by four blocks in a modern city, surrounded by two parallel walls of brick perhaps thirty or forty feet in height. Recent excavations have shown that some extraordinary calamity overwhelmed the city about 1400 B.C. Reddened masses of brick, fire-cracked stones, charred timber and ashes, discovered among the ruins, strangely confirm the Biblical narrative that the city was burned after its walls had crumbled. Whether the walls collapsed at the shouting and trumpetings of the Israelites who marched round it seven times for the seventh day in succession, bearing the Ark of Yahweh, as the story in Joshua tells, or as the result of some earthquake, similar to the one in 1927 which caused the walls of a hotel in Jericho to fall down flat, or whether the city gates were opened from within by the members of the family of Rahab, the harlot, whom the Hebrew spies had contacted and won over earlier, the dramatic capture and wholesale destruction of Jericho by the Israelites is a well-attested fact.

The reduction of the strongholds of the Canaanites followed one by one, though not without

reverses to the conquerors. Thus their first assault on the town of Ai was a disastrous failure. According to the prevailing ideas this defeat was attributed to some sin which had caused divine displeasure. The guilty individual, Achan, who had concealed some of the spoils of Jericho which had been wholly devoted to Yahweh, was discovered by lot, and he and all his family, even his sheep and his oxen and his tent, were stoned and burned in order to appease the wrath of Yahweh.

And so the conquest proceeded, against stubborn opposition by the original inhabitants of the land. The conquering tribes of Israel were far from united. The different tribes settled down in different parts of the land, and it was only at certain grave crises in their fortunes or under the leadership of some outstanding Judge or Prophet that they came together for united defence or assault against their common foes. The tribes of Judah and Simeon, for example, settled in the extreme south, and were cut off from the tribes in the centre and the north by a chain of Canaanite cities. Among these was Jerusalem, of which there is mention in the Tell-el-Amarna letters, which did not fall to the Hebrews till the days of King David. Up in the extreme north the small tribe of Dan established a sanctuary which became of historic importance later. There is an interesting story connected with this, reflecting the beliefs and conditions of the period. The Danites, hard-pressed for living space in the south, sent out spies to explore the possibilities of settlement elsewhere. The spies discovered a town in the north, occupied by the Sidonians, dwelling in safety, but far off from their parent-city of Sidon on the Phoenician coast. The

spies in the course of their wanderings came across a man of the tribe of Ephraim, who had made an ephod and had found a young Levite to be its custodian and priest. The conquering Danites on their march did not scruple to steal both ephod and priest and installed them in their own settlement in Dan, and themselves used it to consult Yahweh![3] Later, after the division of the Jewish kingdom into two, Dan was chosen as one of the chief shrines of the northern kingdom, to serve as a rival to Jerusalem in the south.

A decisive victory of the Hebrew tribes in the north is commemorated in one of the earliest pieces of writing in the Bible, the Song of Deborah.[4] It reads like a rhapsody and was actually sung by the women of Israel as they went out to greet their returning heroes. The Hebrew settlers were faced by a coalition of Canaanite cities under the leadership of Sisera. But the crisis produced, as so often in Israel's history, a great leader, this time a woman, Deborah. She was a prophetess, a religious as well as a political leader, and typical of the great Hebrew leaders. Her clarion call to the Hebrew tribes was: "Come to the help of Yahweh against the mighty." The disunited tribes rallied together under her leadership and a great victory was won in the valley of Esdraelon, a famous battle-ground in Biblical times. The rout of Sisera's huge host of nine hundred war-chariots seems to have been aided by a thunderstorm. In the ancient song we can almost hear the tread of the Lord God of Israel as He marches forth from his abode on Mt. Seir against the enemies of His people, while the

[3] Judges 18.

[4] I. R. 1.

very stars in their courses fight against Sisera; and we see Jael, blessed among women, smiting Sisera with a hammer. Yet she was treacherous, for she killed him after she had served him with milk when he had only asked for water and after she had given him shelter in her house. We hear too the wail of Sisera's mother waiting for the son who will no more return to her. The song also condemns certain tribes, like those of Reuben, Dan and Asher, who did not go to the help of Yahweh.

The disorganized condition of the tribes made them the victims of aggression by the Canaanites still in possession of many parts of the land. It was oppression by a Canaanite tribe known as Midianites that produced a little later another leader who united the people and almost established a monarchy in Israel. This was Gideon, a valiant warrior, who was assured by certain signs, as was Moses, that God was with him. He went out under the guidance of God and with a select band of warriors surprised and defeated the vast host of the Medianites in a midnight attack. The land remained peaceful as long as he lived and the children of Israel wanted this great deliverer to establish a dynastic rule. But after his death an illegitimate son, tried to seize the throne after slaying all Gideon's other sons, but was himself slain in his efforts to consolidate his power.

Aggression by another Canaanite tribe, the Amonites, called to leadership another war-chief, Jephthah the Gileadite. His story is of interest mainly because of the lurid light it throws on the still prevailing crudities of religious beliefs and practices among the Hebrews. Going out to battle against his nation's enemies, Jephthah vowed that he would offer unto

Yahweh whoever came first out of his house to meet him on his victorious return. And who should meet him on his return but his only daughter with tambourines and dances! A vow to Yahweh who had given him the victory was sacrosanct and his daughter must die, a decision which she herself unquestioningly upheld. Only she wanted two months respite to mourn her maidenhood with her companions upon the mountains. At the end of those two months she, an untainted maiden and an only daughter, was offered as a sacrifice, holy, acceptable to Yahweh, as Jephthah and the men of his age understood Him! [5]

The last phase of the long period of intermittent rule by the Judges, those men and sometimes women, who were raised up by Yahweh to deliver His people when hard pressed by the nations that surrounded them, saw the rise of a new power in Palestine. These were the Philistines, whose very name has come to denote the enemies of light, the enemies of the people of God. But so powerful were they that they nearly wrested the promised land from Israel and they gave it the name it still bears. For Palestine is the land of the *Pelestu.* Who these people were, archaeology cannot yet definitely tell. They appear to have come from the Aegean Islands by way of Crete (Caphtor), and seem to have been originally employed by the Egyptians as mercenaries and later allowed to settle on the shores of Canaan. Here they built strong cities and continued a menace to the Hebrews down to the days of the monarchy. In fact it was to withstand their threat of domination that the recalcitrant tribes

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[5] Judges 11. 34-40; I. R. 13.

of the Hebrews agreed to merge into a united nation under the rule of a single king, like the nations round about them.

Samson, the Hercules of Jewish legend, was one of the last of the Judges, if this man of the strong arm and unbridled passions can be dignified by that name. Even measured by the standards of his age his character is far from noble. He is a signal instance of a man who possessed great gifts but failed to consecrate them to a noble cause. The legend attributes his great strength to Yahweh. Even from his birth he was a *Nazarite*, one set apart or dedicated to Yahweh. The Nazarite vow implied abstinence from wine and unclean food, and wearing the hair unshorn. The nomadic Hebrews, from the time of their settlement in Canaan, were in constant danger of being tempted to propitiate the agricultural gods of the setttled Canaanite civilization. The devotees of Yahweh constantly warned the Hebrews against such disloyalty to their own god of the wilderness. Partaking of the fruit of the vine was above everything else the symbol of such disloyalty. Hence in Hebrew belief and practice abstinence from wine and living on the food of the desert were guarantees of divine authority. Yet strength without a double share of wisdom is a snare and Samson's strength, to show how slight withal the gift was, was hung in his hair. This secret he revealed to one of the many Philistine women he loved in succession, and she betrayed him to his enemies. So the last we see of him, after his many exploits against the Philistines, is "eyeless in Gaza", yet wreaking a final vengeance upon the enemies of his God and his people by pulling down a temple of

the Philistine God, Dagon, over the heads of a multitude keeping high festival.

Those were troublous days in Palestine. The oft-repeated refrain of the chronicler of the book of *Judges* is: "In those days there was no king in Israel: every man did that which was right in his own eyes." Another expressive phrase, descriptive of conditions in those days, occurs in the Song of Deborah:

> In the days of Jael the highways were unoccupied;
> And the travellers walked through the by-ways.

And along those by-ways stalked great evils. One story tells of a Levite sojourning on the side of Mt. Ephraim who took for a concubine a woman of Bethlehem in Judah. Returning home with her he was forced to spend a night in Gibeah, a Benjamite town, and there he sought shelter. The wicked Benjamites violated the law of hospitality and outraged the woman so that she died. The Levite on returning to his home town cut the dead body in pieces and sent one to each of the cities of Israel. This was a poignant call to a blood-feud to which all Israel responded. They gathered in their thousands and marched against the offending tribe. But it was only after a three-day siege that they were able to capture Gibeah, and then they slaughtered its inhabitants and burned the city. And not Gibeah only, but in the, no doubt, exaggerated version, every city of Benjamin, the men as well as the beasts. Only 600 Benjamites escaped to live in hiding in the rocks in the wilderness. And the rest of Israel vowed not to give any of their daughters in marriage to the men

of Benjamin. But they repented of it soon and connived at the exiles from Gibeah carrying off Israelitish girls when they went out dancing in the vineyards, lest one whole tribe should be cut off from Israel!

But the record of those days is not wholly unrelieved by touches of humanity, of faithfulness and loyalty in human relationships extending even beyond the bounds of nationality. This is seen in the beautiful idyll of the *Book of Ruth*, which tells of the lineage of Israel's greatest king, David. He was descended from a Moabitess, who out of loyalty to a sorely stricken mother-in-law forsook country and people to share her lot. The story is of the period of the Judges, when a famine in Israel drove a Hebrew family to sojourn in Moab. They found a home there, the two sons marrying Moabitish girls. But the ill-fated Jewish mother lost both husband and sons in the foreign land, and devoid of all hope she decided to return to her native land. But one of her daughters-in-law chose to go with her, leaving for her sake her own home and country. There are few passages more moving in all literature than the speech of Ruth throwing in her lot with her afflicted mother-in-law: "Intreat me not to leave thee, and to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God: where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried: the Lord do so to me, and more also, if aught but death part thee and me."[6] And her faithfulness did not go unrewarded by the God of Israel. Returning to Naomi's home-town, Ruth went out to

[6] Ruth 1. 16-17.

glean in the field of a kinsman of her father-in-law. This rich and generous man, Boaz, having heard of all that Ruth had done for her mother-in-law, not only redeemed Naomi's heritage but also took Ruth as his wife. The account of his sitting at the city gate and offering to a nearer kinsman, in the hearing of the elders of the people, the right of redeeming the deceased's property and of raising up children to him, reflect the ways of jurisprudence in Israel then and for centuries to come.[7] Thus a faithful Moabitess became a mother in Israel, the grand-mother of Israel's greatest king, of one who became the prototype of the Great Deliverer, the King whose Kingdom knows no frontiers.

7 I. R. 14.

13. *Jephthah's Sacrifice* (Judges 11. 34-40).

And Jephthah came to Mizpah unto his house, and, behold, his daughter came out to meet him with timbrels and with dances: and she was his only child; beside her he had neither son nor daughter. And it came to pass, when he saw her, that he rent his clothes, and said, Alas, my daughter! thou hast brought me very low, and thou art one of them that trouble me: for I have opened my mouth unto the Lord, and I cannot go back. And she said unto him, My father, thou hast opened thy mouth unto the Lord; do unto me according to that which hath proceeded out of thy mouth; forasmuch as the Lord hath taken vengeance for thee of thine enemies, even of the children of Ammon. And she said unto her father, Let this thing be done for me: let me alone two months, that I may depart and go down upon the mountains, and bewail my virginity, I and my companions. And he said, Go. And he sent her away for two months: and she departed, she and her companions, and bewailed her virginity upon the mountains. And it came to pass at the end of two months, that she returned unto her father, who did with her according to his vow which he had vowed: and she had not known man. And it was a custom in Israel, that the daughters of Israel went yearly to celebrate the daughter of Jephthah the Gileadite four days in a year.

14. *A Foreigner Becomes A Mother In Israel* (Ruth 4. 1-17).

Now Boaz went up to the gate, and sat him down there: and, behold, the near kinsman of whom Boaz spoke came by; unto whom he said, Ho, such a one! turn aside, sit down here. And he turned aside, and sat down. And he took ten men of the elders of the city, and said, Sit ye down here. And he said unto the near kinsman, Naomi, that is come again out of the country of Moab, selleth the parcel of land, which was our brother Elimelech's: and I thought to disclose it unto thee, saying, Buy it before them that sit here, and before the elders of my people. If thou wilt redeem it, redeem it: but if thou wilt not redeem it, then tell me that I may know: for there

is none to redeem it beside thee; and I am after thee. And he said, I will redeem it. Then said Boaz, What day thou buyest the field of the hand of Naomi, thou must buy it also of Ruth the Moabitess, the wife of the dead, to raise up the name of the dead upon his inheritance. And the near kinsman said, I cannot redeem it for myself, lest I mar my own inheritance: take thou my right of redemption on thee; for I cannot redeem it. Now this was the custom in former time in Israel concerning redeeming and concerning exchanging, for to confirm all things; a man drew off his shoe, and gave it to his neighbour: and this was the manner of attestation in Israel. So the near kinsman said unto Boaz, Buy it for thyself. And he drew off his shoe. And Boaz said unto the elders, and unto all the people, Ye are witnesses this day, that I bought all that was Elimelech's, and all that was Chilion's and Mahlon's, of the hand of Naomi. Moreover Ruth the Moabitess, the wife of Mahlon, have I purchased to be my wife, to raise up the name of the dead upon his inheritance, that the name of the dead be not cut off from among his brethren, and from the gate of his place: ye are witnesses this day. And all the people that were in the gate, and the elders, said, We are witnesses. The Lord make the woman that is come into thy house like Rachel and like Leah, which two did build the house of Israel: and do thou worthily in Ephrathah, and be famous in Bethlehem: and let thy house be like the house of Perez, whom Tamar bare unto Judah, of the seed which the Lord shall give thee of this young woman. So Boaz took Ruth, and she became his wife; and he went in unto her, and the Lord gave her conception, and she bare a son. And the women said unto Naomi, Blessed be the Lord, which hath not left thee this day without a near kinsman, and let his name be famous in Israel. And he shall be unto thee a restorer of life, and a nourisher of thine old age: for thy daughter-in-law, which loveth thee, which is better to thee than seven sons, hath borne him. And Naomi took the child, and laid it in her bosom, and became nurse unto it. And the women her neighbours gave it a name, saying, There is a son born to Naomi. And they called his name Obed: he is the father of Jesse, the father of David.

CHAPTER V

A GREAT TRADITION — THE DAVIDIC KINGDOM

Saul, David and Solomon

With Samuel who lived about 1025 B. C. we come to the last of the Judges and the first of the Jewish Statesman-Prophets who stood behind the throne of Israel, like the ancient *Rishis* of India, counselling, warning and rebuking their kings. The records in the early historical books, 1 & 2 Samuel, 1 & 2 Kings and 1 & 2 Chronicles, are again conflicting in their various accounts. Thus, according to the earlier and more reliable record, the Prophet Samuel was instrumental, under divine guidance, in setting up the Hebrew monarchy, which was a necessary step in the national evolution, particularly in order to meet the menace of Philistine ascendancy. But later accounts, also embedded in the Book of Samuel, reflect the later experiences of kingly tyranny and represent the people's demand for a king as disloyalty to the God who had brought them out of Egypt and fought their battles in the Promised Land.

The story of the birth and childhood of Samuel has the beauty of an idyll. His mother obtained him, she said, in answer to prayer and she returned the gift to the Lord, dedicating Samuel to Him so that he should grow up as His servant. Her song of thanksgiving [1] is strikingly similar to the famous Magnificat

[1] See I. R. 15.

that Mary, the mother of Jesus, sang when her own child stirred in her womb. But it was a corrupt age and environment in which the child Samuel grew up. Eli, the old priest in charge of the Ark of Yahweh at Shiloh, was not able to restrain even his own sons from profaning the sacred sanctuary. The people were then hard pressed by the Philistines, and, worst punishment of all to a people claiming to be guided by God, "there was no open vision, the word of the Lord being seldom heard."[2] It was then that Yahweh found a receptive soul in Samuel and to him as a child in the silence of the night came the still, small voice of God, telling him of the things to come and what to do. And Samuel was willing to listen and to obey.[3]

The hardest act of obedience on Samuel's part may have been to acquiesce in the people's demand for a king. The conflicting records may reflect a conflict in the prophet's own mind[4] regarding the choice between the tradition of God's direct leadership of the nation and the necessity of having a king to lead them against the Philistine hordes pressing in on them from every side. But, far-seeing statesman and prophet that he was, he bowed to the inevitability of the nation being organized into a monarchical state. And under divine direction he chose Saul, a Benjamite, to be the first king over Israel. No man could have seemed more fitted to fill the role of the military leader the nation needed, for Saul was head and shoulders taller than any of the people. It was only

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[2] 1 Samuel 3. 1.
[3] 1 Sam. 3. 10.
[4] 1 Sam. 8. 7.

later that even Samuel learned through bitter experience the lesson that "God seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart." [5]

For the first king proved a sore disappointment. True, Saul had his initial successes. He was able to deliver some of the besieged towns from their enemies. And he gained more than one victory over the Philistines. A resounding victory, which put heart into a sorely distressed people, many of whom were living in caves and thickets and in holds and pits, for fear of the Philistines, was the one at Micmash, won mainly through the valour of Saul's son, Jonathan.[6] But Saul was not at heart religious, and he did not understand or respect the will of God as it was understood in his days. A curious but decisive instance of his disloyalty to Yahweh was his treatment of the Amalekites whom Samuel, speaking for Yahweh, wanted him utterly to destroy. Saul having defeated them saved some of the spoil, the best of the sheep and oxen, ostensibly to offer them in sacrifice, and he also saved alive Agag, the king of Amalek. But this infuriated Samuel, the servant of Yahweh, who had wanted the wholesale destruction of the enemies of his people. It is a rare and striking instance of the strange mixture of insight and crudity so often present in most of man's apprehensions of God that Samuel, while enunciating a great principle of man's relationship to God, illustrated it by an atrocious deed. Condemning Saul's cupidity he rightly declared: Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice,

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[5] 1 Sam. 16. 7.
[6] 1 Sam. 14.

and to hearken than fat of rams. But correcting Saul's conduct he had Agag brought forth and hewed him in pieces before the Lord in Gilgal.[7]

This was the cause and the occasion for Yahweh's final rejection of Saul. The Prophet Samuel was directed by the Lord to anoint another to supplant Saul. This time the choice fell on a man after God's own heart, one who, though greatly failing, was all his life devoted to God, who built up a great tradition of kingship in Israel, to which the nation looked back ever afterwards. This was David, the son of Jesse of Bethlehem in Judah, the birthplace of the Great Redeemer who was to be of the lineage of David himself. This is one of the many instances in Jewish history of their statesman-prophets instigating rebellion against constituted authority and helping to overthrow a duly consecrated king. Theirs certainly was not the modern theory that religion has nothing to do with politics. In the expressive words of the old narrative the spirit of the Lord was departed from Saul and it was with David.[8] David at the time of his election and anointing was only a shepherd boy.[9] But out in the wilds, following after his sheep, he had tasted the loving kindness of the Lord and also the strength of His arm, which could save from both man and beast. These experiences sustained him in his many conflicts with his adversaries and are expressed in some at least of the beautiful Psalms which bear his name and which are among the choicest treasures of the devotional literature of the world.[10]

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7 1 Sam. 15, 22-23.

8 1 Sam. 18. 12.

9 2 Sam. 7. 8.

10 I. R. 16.

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[6] 1 Sam. 14.

and to hearken than fat of rams. But correcting Saul's conduct he had Agag brought forth and hewed him in pieces before the Lord in Gilgal.[7]

This was the cause and the occasion for Yahweh's final rejection of Saul. The Prophet Samuel was directed by the Lord to anoint another to supplant Saul. This time the choice fell on a man after God's own heart, one who, though greatly failing, was all his life devoted to God, who built up a great tradition of kingship in Israel, to which the nation looked back ever afterwards. This was David, the son of Jesse of Bethlehem in Judah, the birthplace of the Great Redeemer who was to be of the lineage of David himself. This is one of the many instances in Jewish history of their statesman-prophets instigating rebellion against constituted authority and helping to overthrow a duly consecrated king. Theirs certainly was not the modern theory that religion has nothing to do with politics. In the expressive words of the old narrative the spirit of the Lord was departed from Saul and it was with David.[8] David at the time of his election and anointing was only a shepherd boy.[9] But out in the wilds, following after his sheep, he had tasted the loving kindness of the Lord and also the strength of His arm, which could save from both man and beast. These experiences sustained him in his many conflicts with his adversaries and are expressed in some at least of the beautiful Psalms which bear his name and which are among the choicest treasures of the devotional literature of the world.[10]

7 1 Sam. 15, 22-23.
8 1 Sam. 18. 12.
9 2 Sam. 7. 8.
10 I. R. 16.

But it was very long before David came into possession of his kingdom. He was bitterly hated by King Saul, who more than once sought to destroy him and drove him as an exile from his country and from his God, as David once bitterly complained.[11] But David had found a faithful friend in Saul's noble son, Jonathan. The story of the friendship between these two is one of the most beautiful in human annals and provided the inspiration for a dirge[12] which is among the most moving in all literature. This loyal friend and valiant soldier, Jonathan, fell fighting along with his father against the Philistines in the battle of Mt. Gilboah.

David's first and greatest achievement was ridding the land of the Philistine menace. Experience gained during the years of his exile, part of which he spent in the land of the Philistines in feigned alliance with them, and the band of valiant fighting men he gathered round him during his exile, stood him in good stead in his fight against the Philistines. He broke their power in a series of engagements in which he was assured of the Lord fighting with him.[13] First enthroned as king in Hebron by his own tribesmen, the Judahites, he succeeded through his tact and his brilliance as a military chieftain in uniting all the tribes under his leadership and so he became king over all Israel. One of his greatest victories was his capture of the ancient fortress of Jerusalem, which had till then remained in Canaanitish hands. This city, perhaps the city with the most sacred associations in all the

[11] 1 Sam. 26. 19.
[12] I. R. 17.
[13] 2 Sam. 5. 22-25.

world, came to be known as the City of David. Modern research has discovered the underground passage and the shaft, through and up which Joab the captain of David's army forced his way into the fortress and surprised the garrison inside.[14]

David consolidated his victories and built up an empire, the only one the Jews knew in all their chequered history and which to later generations became a legend and a presage of future national glory. He reduced to subjection in turn the Moabites, the Ammonites and even the Armaeans of the north, and exacted tributes from them all. From being a race of struggling, hunted peasants the Israelites suddenly became the masters of the eastern Mediterranean. Trade relations were established with the Phoenicians of Tyre, with Damascus and Arabia. The full benefits of these, as well as the corruptions produced by opulence, were experienced only during the reign of his successor, Solomon, the Magnificent. And David was not only a great conquerer, but a great organizer and administrator as well. He organized his army and the religious life of his people. He himself sat at the gate administering justice to all. It is no wonder that *a king like unto David* became the earnest expectation of Israel through all the years of their later travails.

For David represented not only the military strength but the religious fervour of the nation. His devotion to Yahweh was the central thing in his life. One of his first acts after establishing himself in his new capital at Jerusalem was to bring the Ark of the Covenant, the Symbol of Yahweh's presence among His people, into the city. The Ark, since its return

14 S. L. Caiger: ***Bible and Spade,*** **p. 120.**

by the Philistines who had captured it, had remained in an out of the way place. So David went with a great multitude to bring it in pomp to his own city. But an untoward incident occurred which reflects the beliefs of those days. The Ark had been placed on a new cart drawn by oxen. On the way the oxen stumbled and it seemed the Ark would topple over. One of the priests in charge, an officious person, put out his hand to steady the Ark and touched it, "and the anger of the Lord was kindled against Uzzah and God smote him there for his error and there he died by the Ark of God."[15] This is a symbol and a warning to all those who even in these days would zealously defend their God against, what seem to them, the dangers of heresy or atheism! But even David was upset by this caprice of his God and refused to move the Ark further. It was only when it was found that Yahweh had blessed with prosperity the Philistine in whose house by the way-side the Ark was temporarily lodged that David took courage to move it again. This time, it is recorded, that he danced before the Lord with all his might. He leaped and danced with such abandon that his queen, watching from a window, despised him.

But in spite of all his devotion, in spite of the oft-repeated verdict of the early chroniclers that "the Lord was with him", David was a greatly erring soul. His chief weakness was women and he took many wives. To secure a woman whom he fancied he even went to the extent of contriving the murder of her husband by writing to his commander-in-chief to place the loyal soldier in the forefront of

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[15] 2 Sam. 6. 7.

the battle and to retreat from him when the enemies pressed on him. For this David was roundly rebuked by the prophet Nathan.[16] This is but one of the many glorious instances in the history of Israel when those intrepid Men of God in Israel, the prophets, rebuked their kings in the name of their God. But David was one who accepted correction and experienced the blessedness of those whose transgressions are forgiven and whose sins are covered, a forgiveness not mediated through sacrifices and offerings, but through the renewal of the spirit of man by the spirit of God.[17]

But divine forgiveness seldom means the blotting out of the consequences of human wrongdoing. And it did not in the case of David. Dearly did he pay for his moral lapses and his failures to correct his children. He paid for them in unhappiness at home and civil strife in the kingdom. Many of his children grossly misbehaved and one of them, his best beloved, Absalom, rose up in revolt against him. So serious was the rebellion that David had to flee the country, an exile again, while Absalom was crowned king in Hebron. But David's wise counsellors and valiant soldiers did not fail him. They misguided Absalom through specious advice and finally defeated and slew him in battle. David's lament over his rebellious son,[18] as well as his magnanimity towards those who had turned against him in the hour of his trial, show a nature mellowed and disciplined through suffering.

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16 2 Sam. 12. For other instances see 1 Kings 21. 17-19 & Matt. 6.

17 Psalm 32. 1 & Ps. 51. 16 & 17.

18 2 Sam. 18. 33.

David's religious ideas were mainly those of his age. Two narratives in the Book of Kings reflect the crude and cruel beliefs and practices still current. Both are concerned with the understanding of the problem of evil. Disaster was taken to be the sign of God's displeasure. It is only when we come to the Book of Job (5th Century B.C.) that we meet with a more serious grappling with the problem and a more enlightened solution. There was once a famine in the land for three years during David's reign. The explanation accepted by both king and people was that it was due to the sin of his predecessor, Saul, in having put to death the Gibeonites whom Israel under Joshua had sworn to protect. The expiation agreed on was that seven of the descendants of Saul were to be handed over to the Gibeonites to be "hung up to Yahweh" in Gibeon. The timely relief from famine was interpreted as evidence that Yahweh had accepted the bloody sacrifice.[19]

The other story tells of a census in Israel ordered by David, apparently to ascertain his military strength. The census completed in about ten months, revealed one million three hundred thousand able-bodied fighting men in the land. But there was the ancient Semitic belief that to number a people was displeasing to the Deity [20] and a pestilence that occurred at this time was attributed to Yahweh's wrath over the census. Acting on the advice of his prophetic counsellor, Gad, David purchased a threshing floor on Mt. Ophel in Jerusalem and offered on the rock there burnt offerings to appease his offended

[19] 2 Sam. 21. 1-14.
[20] 2 Sam. 24.

God. The spot, so consecrated, became the site of the famous Temple which his son, Solomon, built to Yahweh. The jagged rock over which stood the sacred altar in Solomon's Temple is now enclosed within the Mosque of Omar, and the channel which conveyed the blood of the sacrifices to an underground cavern beneath can still be seen.

The last days of David were clouded by an attempted usurpation of the throne by one of his sons, Adonijah, whom like all his sons the too fond father had spoilt by over-indulgence. But the timely action of Nathan the prophet and Zadok the priest secured the succession for Solomon, the son of David's own choice. The Davidic stories end with the accession of Solomon, about whom Yahweh had given the promise that he would build Him a Temple.

The building of the Temple on Mt. Ophel in Jerusalem was Solomon's greatest achievement. It was also profoundly significant for the nation and for the religion of Judaism. For it centralized, and in time helped to purify, the worship of Yahweh. Solomon himself did not abolish the *high places*, the many sacred sites and mounts associated with Israel's heroes, where worship continued to be offered till the time of the prophetic reformation under King Josiah (7th cent. B. C.). But later historians, judging the early kings by the standards of a later age, condemn them for not having removed the high places.

The Temple itself was a magnificent structure in comparison with the homely buildings to which the Hebrews before Solomon's time were accustomed. Its construction was only possible through the prosperity consequent upon David's consolidation of the kingdom and particularly the trade relations he had

established with the Phoenicians in the north. Hiram, king of Tyre, supplied Solomon with the skilled craftsmen, as well as the timber — cedars — from Lebanon, necessary for the construction. Elaborate and detailed accounts of the measurements and decorations of the building are given, in keeping with the importance the Hebrews attached to this central shrine of their national God — Yahweh. The building consisted of three parts, a porch with two magnificent pillars of brass, a large outer room, in which stood the brazen altar, a sea of molten brass — a huge reservoir of water — and other paraphernalia of sacrifice, and an inner room, of smaller proportions, designed as the abode of the Deity. Within the dark inner room, under two cherubim with outstretched wings, was placed the Ark of the Covenant, visible symbol of Yahweh's presence. As Solomon said in his famous dedicatory prayer,

> Yahweh hath set the sun in the heavens,
> But He hath himself determined to dwell in thick darkness.

The completion of the Temple was celebrated by the king and the assembled representatives of the people, first by the formal transfer of the Ark to the place prepared for it in the inner room or Oracle and then, by elaborate sacrifices. The king himself officiated at the sacrifices of "sheep and oxen that could not be told or numbered for multitude".[21] Later the offering of sacrifices became the special prerogative of the hierarchical priesthood. The great dedicatory prayer[22] that Solomon is recorded to have offered on

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21 1 Kings 8. 5.

22 I. RR. 18.

the occasion has, doubtless, been elaborated by later editors of the book and reflects the religious and ethical ideas of a much later period. But the occasion certainly marked a decisive step in the national and religious evolution of the Hebrews.

Solomon himself was not a particularly religious man. The building of the Temple was but one expression of his magnificence as king and builder. In size and splendour Solomon's palace surpassed even the Temple. And he built altars and high places for his many foreign wives, even joining them in burning incense and making sacrifices to their own gods. His ordering the murder of his father's great general, Joab, even at the altar where he had sought sanctuary, reveals alike his ruthlessness towards his enemies and his disregard of traditional sanctities. For his building enterprises he had recourse to a forced levy of the people. This and his heavy exactions to maintain the lavish expenses of his immense household — the tribute realized seems to have amounted to a tenth of the entire produce of the land [23] — caused sore discontent among a people unused to organized sovereignty. Because of these offences against Israelite traditions, because, in the language of the ancient record, "his heart was not perfect with Yahweh, as was the heart of David his father", Yahweh raised up adversaries against him. The most dangerous of these was Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, an Ephraimite. His revolt was blessed by a prophet of Yahweh, Ahijah of Shiloh. In true prophetic manner Ahijah used symbolism to enforce his prediction of the coming division of the Kingdom. The

[23] See 1 Sam. 8. 10-18.

prophet was clad in a new garment and meeting Jeroboam on the way, he took him aside, rent the garment in twelve pieces and gave ten pieces to Jeroboam, saying: "Thus saith Yahweh, the God of Israel. Behold I will rend the kingdom out of the hand of Solomon and will give ten tribes to thee."[24]

But the division of the kingdom took place only in the days of Solomon's son and successor. Solomon himself died in the glory of the undivided kingdom. This man, whose folly sowed the seeds of disintegration of the kingdom the great David had built up, was yet accounted the wisest among the sons of men. Many are the stories told of his wisdom. One tells of a dream [25] the young King had when Yahweh appeared to him and offered him a boon of anything he would ask. Young Solomon answered that he preferred wisdom above everything else, and Yahweh greatly pleased gave him riches and honour in addition to a wise and discerning mind. Another picturesque story [26] illustrates this much-prized possession. Two women appeared at the court of the king claiming motherhood of the same child, one woman's child having been done to death by the careless mother lying upon it when asleep. The wise young king sent for a sword and ordered the living child to be divided between the two. The real mother revealed herself in her concern for the life of the child, even if it meant parting with it, while the other callously insisted on its being cut in two. The ancient Semitic East always held in the highest respect keenness of

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[24] 1 Kings 11. 28-31.
[25] 1 Kings 3. 8-12.
[26] 1 Kings 3. 16-27.

observation and shrewdness of utterance. Every town and tribe had its group of wise men who were keen students of human nature and life. Their sayings, enshrining the distilled essence of worldly wisdom, were expressed in the form of pithy proverbs. There is a book of Proverbs in the Bible, as well as other books like Ecclesiastes, belonging to what is known as the "Wisdom Literature" of the Hebrews. Tradition assigned the authorship of many of these to Solomon, who was reputed to have uttered 3,000 proverbs and to have composed 5,000 songs. They could certainly not all have come from him. Some of the proverbs, for example, commend monogamy and condemn the tyranny of rulers, and these surely could not have emanated from this luxurious despot. But such was Solomon's reputation for wisdom in Jewish tradition that much of the Wisdom Literature of the race was ascribed to him, just as all the books of the Law, as well as all later modifications thereof, were attributed to Moses, the Great Law-Giver.

Illustrative Readings

15. *The Song of Hannah* (1 Samuel 2. 1-10. cf. St. Luke 1. 46-55).

My heart exulteth in the Lord,
Mine horn is exalted in the Lord:
My mouth is enlarged over mine enemies;
Because I rejoice in thy salvation.

There is none holy as the Lord;
For there is none beside thee:
Neither is there any rock like our God.

Talk no more exceeding proudly;
Let no arrogancy come out of your mouth:
For the Lord is a God of knowledge,
And by him actions are weighed.

The bows of the mighty men are broken,
And they that stumbled are girded with strength.
They that were full have hired out themselves for bread:
And they that were hungry have ceased:
Yea, the barren have borne seven;
And she that hath many children languisheth.

The Lord killeth, and maketh alive:
He bringeth down to the grave, and bringeth up.
The Lord maketh poor, and maketh rich:
He bringeth low, he also lifteth up.

He raiseth up the poor out of the dust,
He lifteth up the needy from the dunghill,
To make them sit with princes,
And inherit the throne of glory:
For the pillars of the earth are the Lord's,
And he hath set the world upon them.

He will keep the feet of his holy ones,
But the wicked shall be put to silence in darkness;
For by strength shall no man prevail.

They that strive with the Lord shall be broken to pieces;
Against them shall he thunder in heaven:
The Lord shall judge the ends of the earth;
And shall give strength unto his king,
And exalt the horn of his anointed.

16. *The Shepherd Psalm* (Psalm 23).

The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.
He maketh me to lie down in green pastures:
He leadeth me beside the still waters.
He restoreth my soul:
He guideth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.
Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,
I will fear no evil; for thou art with me:
Thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me.
Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies:
Thou hast anointed my head with oil; my cup runneth over.
Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life:
And I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.

17. *David's Lament over Saul and Jonathan* (2 Samuel 1. 19-27).

Thy glory, O Israel, is slain upon thy high places!
How are the mighty fallen!
Tell it not in Gath,
Publish it not in the streets of Ashkelon;
Lest the daughters of the uncircumcised triumph.
Ye mountains of Gilboa,
Let there be no dew nor rain upon you, neither fields of offerings:
For there the shield of the mighty was vilely cast away,
The shield of Saul, as of one not anointed with oil.
From the blood of the slain, from the fat of the mighty,
The bow of Jonathan turned not back,
And the sword of Saul returned not empty.
Saul and Jonathan were lovely and pleasant in their lives,

And in their death they were not divided;
They were swifter than eagles,
They were stronger than lions.
Ye daughters of Israel, weep over Saul,
Who clothed you in scarlet delicately,
Who put ornaments of gold upon your apparel.
How are the mighty fallen in the midst of the battle!
Jonathan is slain upon thy high places.
I am distressed for thee, my brother Jonathan:
Very pleasant hast thou been unto me:
Thy love to me was wonderful, passing the love of women.
How are the mighty fallen,
And the weapons of war perished!

18. *Solomon's Dedicatory Prayer in the Temple* (1 Kings 8. 22-43).

And Solomon stood before the altar of the Lord in the presence of all the congregation of Israel, and spread forth his hands toward heaven: and he said, O Lord, the God of Israel, there is no God like thee, in heaven above, or on earth beneath; who keepest covenant and mercy with thy servants that walk before thee with all their heart: who hast kept with thy servant David my father that which thou didst promise him..........But will God in very deed dwell on the earth? Behold, heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain thee; how much less this house that I have builded! Yet have thou respect unto the prayer of thy servant and to his supplication, O Lord my God, to hearken unto the prayer thy servant prayeth before thee this day: that thine eyes may be open toward this house night and day, even toward the place whereof thou hast said, My name shall be there.........If a man sin against his neighbour, and an oath be laid upon him to cause him to swear, and he come and swear before thine altar in this house: then hear thou in heaven, and do, and judge thy servants, condemning the wicked, to bring his way upon his own head; and justifying the righteous, to give him according to his righteousness..........If there be in the land famine, if there be pestilence, if there be blasting, or mildew, locust or caterpillar; if their enemy besiege them in the land of their cities; whatsoever plague, whatsoever sickness there be; what prayer and supplication soever be made by any man or by all

thy people of Israel, which shall know everyman the plague of his own heart, and spread forth his hands towards this house: then hear thou in heaven thy dwelling place, and forgive, and do, and render to every man according to all his ways, whose heart thou knowest; (for thou, even thou only, knowest the hearts of all the children of men;) that they may fear thee all the days that they live in the land which thou gavest unto our fathers. Moreover concerning the stranger, that is not of thy people Israel, when he shall come out of a far country for thy name's sake; (for they shall hear of thy great name, and of thy mighty hand, and of thy stretched out arm;) when he shall come and pray toward this house; hear thou in heaven thy dwelling place, and do according to all that the stranger calleth to thee for; that all the peoples of the earth may know thy name, to fear thee, as doth thy people Israel, and that they may know that this house which I have built is called by thy name.

CHAPTER VI

KINGS AND PROPHETS OF NORTHERN ISRAEL — (933-721 B. C.)

Elijah, Amos and Hosea

As long as he reigned Solomon was able to hold the Jewish tribes together in a united kingdom, by means of his strong arm and his great prestige. But no sooner was he dead than the fissiparous tendencies latent in the original nomadic stock asserted themselves. The banner of revolt was raised by Jeroboam, who had been instigated by prophetic counsel and who now returned from exile in Egypt. He voiced the people's demand for a lightening of the heavy burdens of taxation and forced labour that Solomon had imposed. But Rehoboam, Solomon's son and successor, followed the advice of the members of his corrupt entourage and threatened severer exactions. He was met with the retort of the northern tribes :

> What share have we in David ?
> We have no claim in the son of Jesse.
> To your tents, O, Israel !
> Now care for your own house, O David !

So the kingdom was divided, never again to be united. The larger northern State, Israel, constituted ten tribes, and the smaller southern kingdom comprised the territories of Judah and Benjamin. Jeroboam was not only a successful rebel, but a capable organizer as well. Though his own dynasty

was not destined to survive, he laid well the foundations of his kingdom. One of his far-seeing acts was to set up two shrines for his people, one at Dan in the north and the other at Bethel, to prevent them from being attracted to the central shrine of Yahweh worship in Jerusalem. Of these the one at Bethel, which had very ancient and sacred associations, from the time of the Patriarch Jacob, became the royal sanctuary of the northern kingdom. It is significant that the images he put up at these shrines were calves of gold. These he presented to the people as symbols of Yahweh, telling them : Behold, thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt.[1] Most likely this was in keeping with Israelite practice and ideas in those days.[2] But it was severely denounced by the latter prophetic editors, through whom the records of the northern kingdom have come down to us, and the kings of Israel are consistently condemned for not having departed from "the sin of Jeroboam, wherewith he made Israel to sin".[3]

A bas-relief left on the wall of the Temple of Amon at Karnak by Sishak, King of Egypt, throws light on the political situation in Palestine during the days of Jeroboam. It depicts the victorious Pharaoh dealing heavy blows on the heads of captive Jews and mentions several conquered Jewish cities. Most of these were in the territory of Jeroboam and that has presented a difficulty in interpretation to explorers, for Jeroboam was an ally or vassal of

1 Kings 12. 28.
2 Exodus 22. 4.
3 1 Kings 14. 16.

Egypt, and the Bible speaks only of Sishak's expedition against the southern kingdom. Probably the Pharaoh only recaptured for his ally the cities that had been filched from him by Rehoboam. Anyway Jeroboam was not too secure on his throne, for he had to move his capital from Shechem, which he had originally fortified to Penuel on the east of the Jordan.

The history of the northern kingdom was one long succession of the overthrows of dynasties and the successful *coups d'etat* by scheming and unscrupulous adventurers. Jeroboam's son could maintain himself on the throne for only two years.. He was struck down by Baasha, who established a short-lived dynasty of the tribe of Issachar. The chief event of his reign was a war with the southern kingdom of Judah, which appealed for help to the Arameans of Damascus, thus bringing Syria and later Assyria into the arena of Palestinian history.

Baasha's dynasty was destroyed by one of his military chieftains, Zimri, who in turn after a brief reign of seven days, was smitten by another warlord, Omri. The Bible makes only a very brief reference to Omri, but he was a very powerful monarch. In some respects he was the David of the northern kingdom, building for it a secure fortress as capital at Samaria, which became one of the leading cities of Palestine. So powerful was he that in Assyrian records since his time Palestine is referred to as "*the land of Humri*".[4] The famous Moabite Stone refers to his successful inroads into Moab, attributing

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[4] An Assyrian Inscription of Ashurnazirpal of 874 B.C. See *Bible and Spade*, p. 132.

Moab's discomfitures to the anger of Chemosh, the god of Moab, against his people. He was also the first Israelite king to pay tribute to Assyria, relations with which rising power were fraught with very disastrous consequences to Israel. He also established trade relations with the Sidonians, thus laying the foundations of the northern kingdom's prosperity.

But it was left to his son, Ahab, to shake off the overlordship of the Arameans and to reap the benefits as well as the disasters of foreign alliances. The Bible makes mention of the ivory house that he built, and recent excavations in Samaria have given evidence of the splendour of Ahab's court, giving point to the prophetic denunciation later of those "that lie upon beds of ivory, and stretch themselves upon their couches".[5]

To Bible writers Ahab is significant for the corruption he brought into the religious and moral life of the nation. The way was paved for this by his marriage with a Tyrian Princess, Jezebel. The daughter of a one-time priest of Baal Melkart, the God of the Phoenicians, who became king by assassinating his sovereign, Jezebel brought to Ahab's court not only a strong religious zeal for the foreign God, but also ideas of despotism that would stop at nothing in gaining personal ends. She thus became the symbol of everything the devout Yahweh worshipper detested. Under her patronage Baal worship gained prestige and became a serious rival to the traditional worship of Yahweh.

The threat to religion produced a champion, Elijah, one whose zeal and daring so impressed

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[5] Amos 6. 4.

themselves on the nation's memory that a prophet in his spirit and power[6] was expected to herald the nation's final deliverance. Elijah used the occasion of a severe drought in the land, which was unquestioningly accepted as evidence of Yahweh's displeasure, to strike a decisive blow for Yahweh against the prevalent Baal worship. The question with which he confronted king and people was: "How long halt ye between two opinions? if Yahweh be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him."[7] And he staged a dramatic combat between the rival gods. Assembling the people as well as the priests of Baal on Mount Carmel, he challenged the priests of Baal to bring down fire from heaven to consume a sacrifice laid ready on one of two rival altars. The god who answers by fire, he declared, will be God indeed. And Yahweh answered by fire, probably through a lightning flash which consumed his offering. Elijah improved the occasion by rousing the assembled multitude to capture and slaughter all the priests of Baal present, four hundred and fifty in number.

Then follows a touching anecdote which reveals the human side of this prophet of fire and sword. He was intimidated by the threat of Queen Jezebel to take his life, in retaliation for her slaughtered priests by the morrow, and he fled to Mount Horeb, the ancient seat of Yahweh, ere He led Israel to the Land of Promise which proved such a snare to them. And here his God appeared to him, speaking not in thunder or lightning, not in earthquake or fire, but in a still, small voice,[8] assuring him that Yahweh had

[6] Luke 1. 17.
[7] 1 Kings 18. 21.
[8] I. R. 19.

yet seven thousand in Israel who had not bowed the knee to Baal. Thus assured, Elijah emerged again, this time as the champion of the traditional rights of the people against the inroads of monarchical despotism. Ahab, wanting to extend his palace grounds, had requisitioned an adjacent vineyard belonging to a certain Naboth of Jezreel. But Naboth refused to sell his patrimony to the king. By the law of Israel the king was helpless; but not so Jezebel with her experience of kingly absolutism in other lands. She caused letters to be written in the king's name, commanding the elders of Jezreel to bring false charges against Naboth and have him executed. But when Ahab went to take possession of the land he was met by the stern prophet of doom, Elijah, with the question and the denunciation: "Hast thou killed and also taken possession? Thus saith the Lord, in the place where dogs licked the blood of Naboth shall dogs lick thy blood, even thine." The subsequent story tells how the prophecy was literally fulfilled.

So great was the veneration in which this dauntless champion of Yahweh worship and traditional morality was held that the story became current that he did not die, but was taken up bodily into heaven.[9] And that belief apparently lay behind the expectation that he would appear again before the day of the great deliverance.[10] But he did not depart before he had appointed a successor to carry on his work. This was Elisha, the Tishbite, the instruction to whom was to anoint Jehu, a captain of Ahab's army as the future king of Israel. Elisha was more a courtly

9 2 Kings 2. 1-14.
10 Mark 9. 11-13.

adviser and an organizer than a prophet breathing fire and sword. It is from his time that we hear of the organized prophetic guilds, "sons of the prophets", who formed as it were the Yahweh party in Israel's religion and politics. They were mainly religious enthusiasts, living together in groups and subject to frenzied ecstasies, induced by music and dancing. Such induced ecstasy was the means whereby they received divine communications. It is interesting to observe that a casual reference tells us that even a prophet of Elisha's calibre needed that kind of stimulus. When his advice was sought by the kings of Israel and Judah on a projected campaign, Elisha said : Bring me a minstrel. And the old record naively adds : "When the minstrel played the hand of the Lord came upon him." [11]

The story of the campaign referred to throws a gruesome light upon still prevalent religious customs in the Semitic world. Jehoram, the son of Ahab, went out against Moab, which had sought to throw off the yoke that Omri and Ahab had laid upon them. The battle went sore against Moab and then Mesha, king of Moab, did a desperate deed which in those days was believed to compel the deity to drastic action. He offered upon the wall, i.e., in the sight of the contending hosts, his eldest son as a burnt offering to his God, Chemosh.[12] And in the language of the Bible "great wrath came against Israel", the wrath of Chemosh, the God of Moab. This story is confirmed and supplemented by the contemporary inscription of Mesha on the recently discovered Moabite Stone.

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[11] 2 Kings 3. 15.

[12] 2 Kings 3. 26 & 27.

And Mesha too claims it as a victory for his God against Yahweh, whose sacred vessels he captured and dragged before Chemosh.[13]

Complete, ruthless, extermination soon overtook the family of Ahab. The instrument of this was Jehu who had been instigated to rebellion by Elisha, but whose revolution turned out to be the most bloody recorded in all of Israel's history. He ordered Ahab's imperious queen Jezebel, who met him with a bitter taunt, to be hurled down from her apartment and trampled by horses under foot. The ancient narrator records that this too happened in fulfilment of Elijah's prediction regarding her fate. Jehu caused two heaps to be made at the city-gates of the heads of seventy descendants of Ahab. Not content with these he destroyed all the priests and worshippers of Baal, resorting to the ruse of gathering them all together under the pretence of himself worshipping Baal. Significantly enough he did this in the presence of a Rechabite, a Yahweh extremist, to display his zeal for Yahweh.[14] But though approved by the zealots of his day, his action was utterly condemned later by the great prophet Hosea, who announced God's vengeance upon Israel for the blood shed at Jezreel.[15]

But these religious and political massacres left Jehu's kingdom weak. His alliance with Hazael of Damascus against Assyria was a blunder. The famous Black Obelisk of Shalmanezer III tells of Assyria's punitive expeditions against Aram and Israel. The boastful monument gives a pictorial representation

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13 This is the earliest indubitable mention of the divine name outside the Bible. See *Bible and Spade*, p. 137.

14 2 Kings 10. 16.

15 Hosea 1. 3-5.

of Jehu kneeling before his Assyrian master and the caption tells of the tribute of "silver, gold, a golden bowl, a golden beaker, golden goblets, a golden ladle, golden pitchers, bars of lead, a sceptre for the hand of the king and spear shafts", that Shalmanezer received from Jehu, the son of Omri ![16] This submission of Jehu to their common foe was greatly resented by Hazael of Damascus, and when the Assyrian armies retired Aram began to molest Israel. This molestation continued and increased during the succeeding reigns till Israel became a dependency of Damascus. The oppression of the people was so severe that during a siege of Samaria by the Arameans about this time the people even began to devour their own children.[17]

Then the Biblical narrative cryptically remarks: "Yahweh raised up a saviour for Israel." A recent discovery has revealed that this was a new Aramean King, Zakar, who defeated the Arameans of Damascus and freed Israel from the terrible yoke of Damascus.[18] This gave the opportunity for the successors of Jehu to recover most of their ancient territory and revive something of the glory of Israel under the House of Omri. The height of this glory was reached under Jeroboam II (781-740 B.C.). The dangers of Baal worship were removed, but prosperity brought new and subtler dangers to the moral and religious life of the nation; and these called forth a new type of prophet, the prophet of social righteousness and universal religion.

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[16] C. F. Kent: *The Historical Bible*, vol. III, p. 50.
[17] 2 Kings 6. 28f.
[18] Kent: *H.B.* vol. III, pp. 51f.

The first of these and one of the greatest of all times was Amos, the lowly herdman of Tekoa. He described himself as an herd-man and a dresser of sycomore trees.[19] His double occupation suggests that he was one who sought employment wherever he could find it at the different seasons of the year and that therefore he belonged to the poorest labouring class in the land. When challenged as to his credentials he disclaimed being connected with the prophetic guilds even. But following the flock and meditating on the fortunes of his people he had heard the unmistakable call of his God to go and prophesy to his people. As he expressed it in a characteristic simile: "The lion hath roared, who will not fear? The Lord God hath spoken, who can but prophesy?"[20]

Such a man could not be silenced by the opposition of priests or the threat of kings. It is the glory of Israel's religion to have produced a succession of such intrepid Men of God, whom nothing could daunt, who spoke as they were moved by the Spirit of God, counselling, warning or denouncing their kings and people. Popular notion, even in Christian times, regards them primarily as foretellers of coming events, finding the authentication of their utterances in their future fulfilment. But they were more *forthtellers* than *foretellers*, declaring the messages of their God to their own generations, their foretellings being simply instances of the clarity of their consecrated visions, which could read clearly the signs of the times. Though many of them came

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19 I. R. 20.
20 Amos 3. 8.

from the ranks, they were all men of sound judgement and common sense, well versed in the history of their people and fully aware of the trends of events in the world around them. So they were able to foresee the consequences of the short-sighted policies of their kings and politicians and to recognize the instruments of God's punishment of a guilty nation. Above all, they sensed, with ever clearer insight, the moral laws which govern the universe and therefore in unbroken succession, culminating in Jesus of Nazareth, they were able to declare unto men God's purposes and the ways in which those purposes are, slowly but surely, being fulfilled in and through man.

Fortunately for the race the records of these prophets have been kept and handed down from the time of Amos, who is often referred to as the first of the writing prophets. The books of the prophets in their present form have undoubtedly been edited by later disciples and contain much that is extraneous; but the kernel of them represents the vivid and unforgettable oracles of the great masters. For they were not only great and daring saints, but were also masters of arresting and forceful expression.

Nothing could have been more dramatic than Amos's method of securing a hearing at his first appearance. With an unpalatable message of Israel's guilt and impending punishment Amos appeared at the royal sanctuary of Bethel, apparently on the occasion of an annual festival there, and started with telling denunciations of Israel's enemies all around. Damascus, Gaza, Ammon and Moab, he condemned them all for violations of the moral law, for sinning against the light that each had. Then

with irrefutable logic he turned on Israel to whom more had been given and from whom therefore more would be demanded. Yahweh had favoured Israel more than other nations with religious light and leadership, sending them prophets and Nazarites, but they had despised these, and therefore greater, and not less, punishment would descend on them. He turned against them their very argument of special divine choice :

> You only have I known of all the races of the earth,
> Therefore will I visit upon you all your iniquities.[21]

What is profoundly significant about the prophecies of Amos is his demand for social righteousness in the name of God. The sins of Israel that he specially denounces are those of social iniquity, consequent upon national prosperity. Political independence and national prosperity had meant luxury for the few and oppression of the many. Himself one of the proletariat, it was this trampling upon the head of the poor that roused his indignation, and in burning words that have lost none of their fire through the centuries, he denounced the richer classes of Israel as responsible for this. Particularly severe was he upon the women of Israel who egged on their husbands to greater oppression. " Hear this word," he thundered at them in the name of Yahweh :

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21 Amos 3. 2.

Ye kine of Bashan, who dwell in the mountain
of Samaria,
Who oppress the poor and crush the needy,
Who say to your husbands, 'Bring, that we
may drink'.
Behold the days are coming upon you
When ye shall be taken away with hooks,
even the last of you with fish-hooks." [22]

Further, no modern Marxist is as strong as he in condemning a religion which sanctioned and sanctified such oppression. But he did not make the mistake made by modern materialist champions of social justice, that of identifying all religion with false religion. Rather was it in the name of God and real religion that he denounced its aberrations. Speaking at the citadel of Israel's worship he declared in the name of the God they professed to worship:

Come to Bethel, and transgress;
To Gilgal, and multiply transgression; [23]
I hate, I despise your feasts,
I will take no delight in your solemn
assemblies.
Take thou away from me the noise of thy
songs;
For I will not hear the melody of thy viols.
But let judgement roll down as waters,
And righteousness as a mighty stream. [24]

The world yet awaits a religion that will put first things first, that will make the maintenance of

22 Amos 4. 1 & 2.
23 Amos 4. 4.
24 Amos 5. 21-24.

p. 33

Abraham's Sacrifice

p. 65

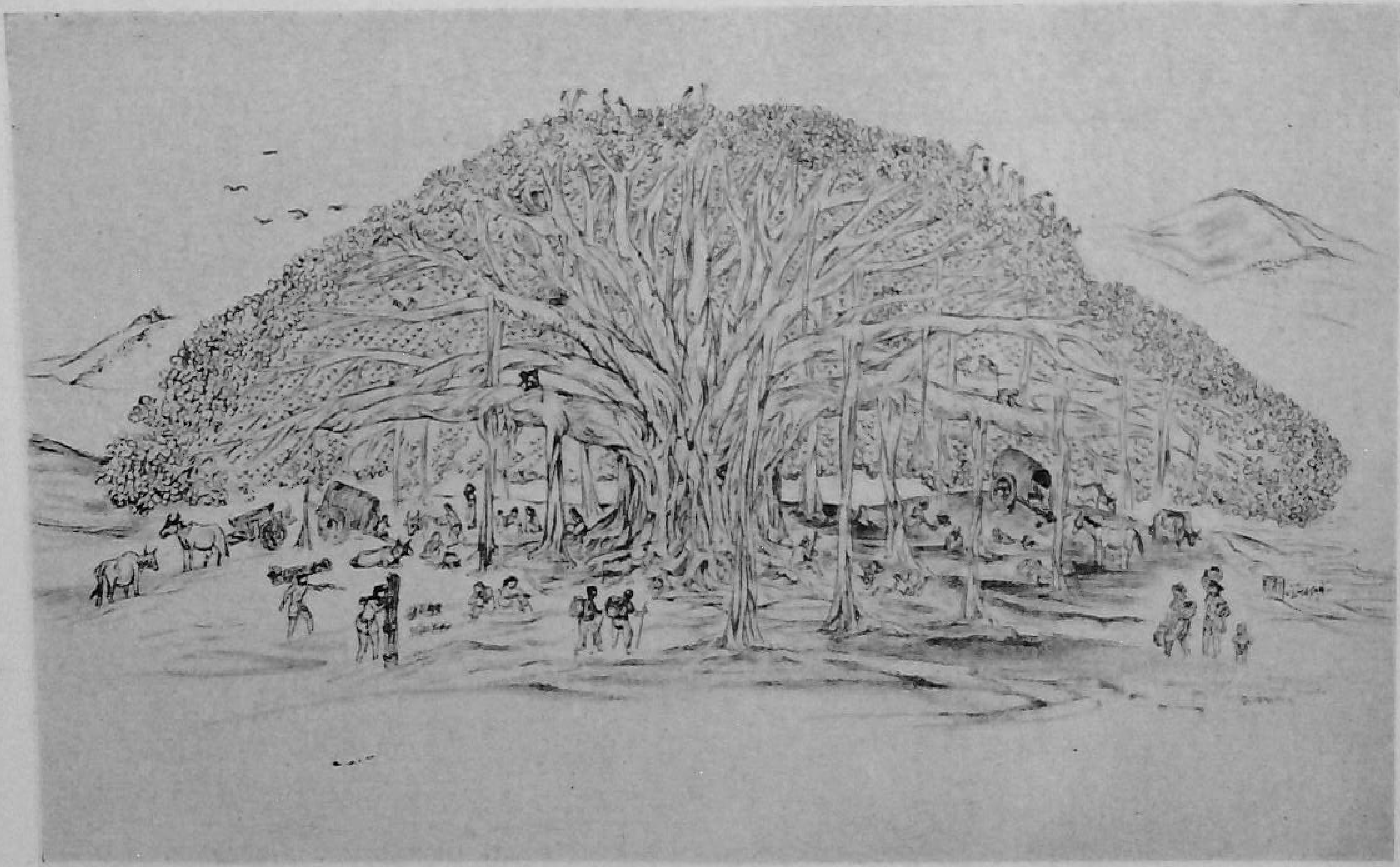
" The Lord is my Shepherd."

p. 155

The Mother and Child

p. 158

The Baptism of Jesus

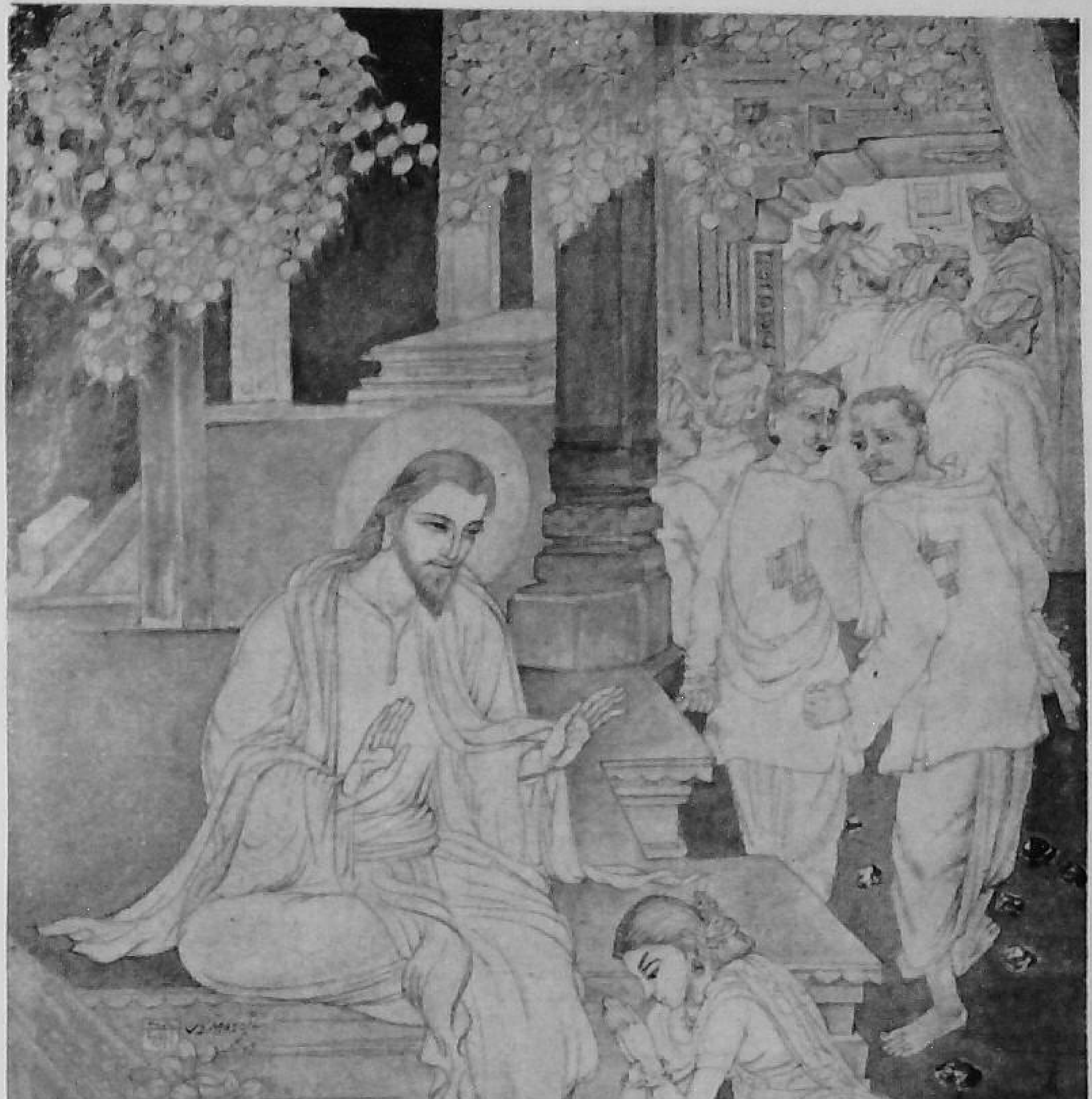


p. 163

The Parable of the *Banian tree* (the Mustard Seed)

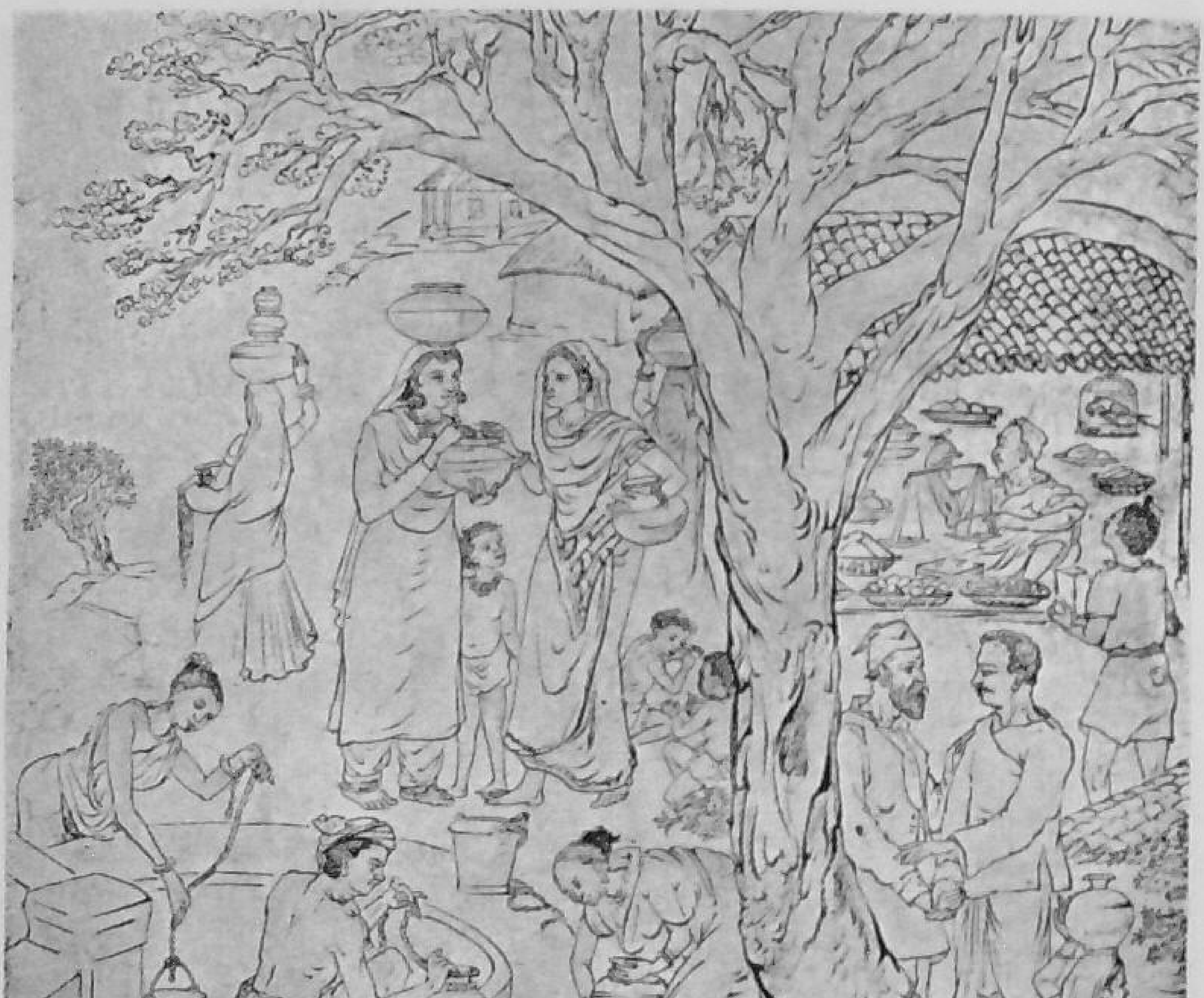
p. 177

The Forgiving Father



p. 179

" Neither do I condemn Thee."



p. 190

" Ye all are one in Christ Jesus "

justice and righteousness the primary thing in its organization and everything else secondary.

Almost contemporary with Amos was another major prophet of Israel, Hosea. If Amos's was the lion's roar denouncing the sins of the nation and predicting the inevitable doom that awaited it, Hosea's was the gentle pleading of a man who had learned the lessons of long-suffering and forgiveness in the painful school of personal affliction. Married to an unfaithful wife he had felt within himself the love that will not let the loved one go, but would still draw her "with cords of a man, with bands of love".[25] With the love of symbolism characteristic of Hebrew prophets the names he gave to his children expressed God's dealings with his people at the time: Lo-ruhamah (unpitied) and Lo-ammi (Not-my-people).[26] Reflecting upon his own bitter experiences of marital unhappiness he saw in them a picture of Yahweh's relations with his people. If he a man could yet refuse to abandon his unfaithful wife and long to wean her back from her wicked ways, how much more must Yahweh feel towards his people?

> How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? how
> shall I let thee go, Israel?
> I will not execute the fierceness of mine anger,
> I will not turn to destroy Ephraim.
> For I am God and not man; the Holy One in
> the midst of thee.[27]

cries Yahweh through the agonized lips of his servant Hosea.

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25 Hosea 11. 3.
26 Hosea 1. 6 & 9.
27 Hosea 11. 8 & 9.

But his own experiences had taught Hosea that forgiveness is not possible without repentance. Having bought back his wife from her paramours, he found that immediate restoration to marital felicity was not possible; through deprivation and discipline she must learn to repent of her evil ways. So too, argued the prophet, the children of Israel will have to abide many days without king and priesthood, before they can be taken back into Yahweh's favour. The main burden of Hosea's prophecy is a plea for repentance to the nation. "Plead with your mother, plead; let her put away her whoredoms from her face."[28] "Return O Israel to Yahweh thy God; for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity."[28] No prophet seems to have pondered more deeply than Hosea on the evidence of God's tender care for Israel in the past; certainly none has drawn a more alluring picture of Yahweh's happiness in his people in the early days of their covenant relationship.[29]

Hosea is also significant as one of the earliest of Hebrew religious teachers to emphasize the need of real saving knowledge of God, as against sacerdotalism and even zeal for Yahweh. He is most severe upon the priests who fail to give right instruction to the people. Again and again do we hear the lament that the people perish for lack of knowledge.[30] And in the final exhortation the people are admonished to "take with you words and return

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[28] Hosea 2. 2 & 14. 1.
[29] I. R. 21.
[30] Hosea 4. 6 & 4. 2.

unto the Lord ".[31] He had the insight to perceive that in the final analysis human wrong-doing is really due to failure to discern the love and the goodness of the all-loving Father-heart of God.

Measured in the light of his times and by his influence upon later prophets Hosea was one of the greatest and most original of all Hebrew prophets. Isaiah and Jeremiah were steeped in his teachings. And the greatest of them all, Jesus of Nazareth, showed his indebtedness to this early prophet of the Gospel of Divine Love and Forgiveness by quoting him. Rebuking the false teachers of his own day, who would observe the letter and not the spirit of the Law, Jesus reminded them of a saying of this forerunner of his :

" But go ye and learn what this meaneth : 'I desire mercy and not sacrifice.' " [32]

But the warnings and pleadings of the great prophets fell on deaf ears. The kings and leaders of Northern Israel continued in their apostasy to their God and their oppression of the people, unaware of the instruments of Yahweh's wrath about to descend on them. The inspired vision of the prophets had detected that rising cloud in the north, at first no bigger than a man's hand, which was soon to overshadow the whole mid-eastern sky. Almost before Hosea had ceased speaking, a new king of Assyria, Tiglath Pileser IV, designated Pul in the Bible, invaded Israel. King Menahem saved his kingdom from desolation by submitting to Assyria and paying a heavy tribute. Apparently this act was

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31 Hosea 14. 1.

32 Matthew 9. 13 & Hosea 6. 6.

regarded as a betrayal of the country and Menahem's son and successor, Pekahiah, was struck down by a rebel chieftain, Pekah. King Pekah at once formed a coalition with Rezin, king of Damascus, against the common enemy. But Tiglath Pileser lost no time in reducing both Damascus and Samaria to submission. A boastful inscription of Tiglath Pileser, dated 734 B.C., speaks of how he shut up Rezin like a bird in a cage, and of how in the following year he overran "the Land of Omri and carried off all its people, together with their gods to Assyria". A puppet king, Hoshea, was set up in Samaria. After six years of submission Hoshea rebelled against Assyria, relying on Egyptian help. This brought the Assyrian again against Samaria. Owing mainly to its natural defences Samaria was able to defy the siege for three years; but finally in 722 B.C. it fell to Sargon, the new emperor of Assyria. An inscription made by Sargon tells of how "in the first year of my rule I besieged Samaria and conquered it. 27,290 of its inhabitants I carried into captivity. . . . I settled there people from the lands I had conquered."[33]

Thus ended the independent existence of a kingdom that had disregarded the counsels of its wisest teachers and defied the demands of its God. In spite of the boastful claims of its conquerors, it could have been only the nobles and the upper classes of the nation that were carried into captivity. The common people that remained in the land mixed with the peoples that were transported thither from other conquered countries. The Bible tells of how the new inhabitants of the land were plagued with lions,

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[33] *Bible and Spade*, p. 148.

because they knew not the law of the God of the land, and of how at their request a priest of Yahweh was sent unto them from among the Jewish exiles.[34] But the worship of Yahweh that was thus restored was only a corrupt form of the faith, mixed up with the cruder beliefs and practices of the foreign peoples. This was the origin of the *Samaritan* faith and people, whom the Jews despised ever afterwards. A little group of them, about a hundred, still live together at Nablus, the ancient Schechem, under the shadow of their sacred mountain Gerizin, and worship Yahweh as did their ancestors at the same holy site. Of all the many petty peoples that lived in Palestine in ancient times they alone remain.

34 2 Kings 17.25-41.

Illustrative Readings

19. *The Still, Small Voice* (1 Kings 19. 9-18).

And he (Elijah) arose, and did eat and drink ,and went in the strength of that meat forty days and forty nights unto Horeb the mount of God. And he came thither unto a cave, and lodged there; and, behold, the word of the Lord came to him, and he said unto him, What doest thou here, Elijah? And he said, I have been very jealous for the Lord, the God of hosts; for the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thine altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword: and I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life, to take it away. And he said, Go forth, and stand upon the mount before the Lord. And, behold, the Lord passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks before the Lord; but the Lord was not in the wind: and after the wind an earthquake; but the Lord was not in the earthquake: and after the earthquake a fire; but the Lord was not in the fire: and after the fire a still small voice. And it was so, when Elijah heard it, that he wrapped his face in his mantle, and went out and stood in the entering in of the cave. And, behold, there came a voice unto him and said, What doest thou here, Elijah? And he said, I have been very jealous for the Lord, the God of hosts....And the Lord said unto him, Go, return on thy way to the wilderness of Damascus: and when thou comest, thou shalt anoint Hazael to be king over Syria; and Jehu the son of Nimshi shalt thou anoint to be king over Israel: and Elisha the son of Shaphat shalt thou anoint to be prophet in thy room....Yet will I leave me seven thousand in Israel, all the knees which have not bowed unto Baal, and every mouth which hath not kissed him.

20. *The Conflict Between Priest and Prophet* (Amos 7. 10-17).

Then Amaziah the priest of Bethel sent to Jeroboam the king of Israel saying, Amos hath conspired against thee in

the midst of the house of Israel: the land is not able to bear his words. For thus saith Amos, Jeroboam shall die by the sword, and Israel shall surely be led away captive out of his land. Also Amaziah said unto Amos, O thou seer, go, flee thee away into the land of Judah, and there eat bread, and prophesy there: but prophesy not again any more at Bethel: for it is the King's sanctuary, and it is a royal house. Then answered Amos and said to Amaziah, I was no prophet, neither was I a prophet's son; but I was an herdman, and a dresser of sycomore trees: and the Lord took me from following the flock, and the Lord said unto me, Go, prophesy unto my people Israel. Now therefore, hear thou the word of the Lord: Thou sayest, Prophesy not against Israel, and drop not thy word against the house of Isaac; therefore thus saith the Lord: Thy wife shall be an harlot in the city, and thy sons and thy daughters shall fall by the sword, and thy land shall be divided by line; and thou shalt die in a land that is unclean, and Israel shall surely be led away captive out of his land.

21. *God's Yearning Love for Man* (Hosea 11. 1-9).

When Israel was young, then I began to love him,
And out of Egypt I called my son.
The more I called them
The further they went away from me.
They kept sacrificing to Baalim
And making offerings to images.
Yet it was I who taught Ephraim to walk,
Taking them up in my arms;
But they did not know that I healed them.
With human cords I ever drew them,
With bands of love.
And I was to them as one who lifts up the yoke from off
their jaws,
And bending toward them, I gave them food to eat.
They must return to the land of Egypt,
Or Assyria will be their king;
For they have refused to return to me.
Therefore the sword shall whirl in their cities,
And shall devour in their fortresses;
For my people are bent in rebelling against me,
And upon the Baalim they call with one accord.

How can I give thee up, O Ephraim! how can I give thee over, O Israel!
How am I to give thee up as Admah! make thee like Zeboim!
My heart asserts itself;
My sympathies are all aglow.
I will not carry into effect the fierceness of my anger;
I will not turn to destroy Ephraim.
For God am I, and not man.
Holy in the midst of thee, therefore I will not consume.

CHAPTER VII

KINGS AND PROPHETS OF JUDAH — I

(933-686 B.C.)

Isaiah and Micah

The story of the Southern Kingdom of Judah was uneventful compared with that of Northern Israel. Shut in on nearly every side by natural and political barriers, the Dead Sea on the east, the wilderness on the south and the steep headlands of Judah on the west, as well as by the buffer States of Moab and Philistia, it almost enjoyed complete immunity from foreign invasions for about two centuries after the division of the kingdom and might have maintained its independent existence much longer if it had listened to the counsels of its wisest statesmen, its prophets, to keep aloof from entangling alliances. The prestige of the Davidic dynasty also saved the kingdom from internal disruption. The dynasty was maintained till the final Babylonian conquest, a scion of the line being always installed on the throne, even after the assassination of the reigning monarch on two or three occasions.

The centralization of Yahweh worship in the Jerusalem Temple also contributed a great deal to the stability of the kingdom. In spite of that, however, worship continued to be offered at the ancient sacred shrines ; the final stamping out of these holy places came much later as the result of a prophetic revolution in the seventh century. But the later

chroniclers, reviewing the careers of the early kings of Judah, condemn them all, even those who "did that which was right in the eyes of the Lord", for not having removed the high places, where the people still continued to burn incenses and to offer sacrifices. [1]

A marriage alliance, during the days of Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, with the house of Ahab, healed for a time the wounds of division between the north and the south, but it brought in its train the dangers of Baal worship to Judah. Athaliah, daughter of Jezebel, Queen Mother of Joram, king of Judah, who was slain in Jehu's revolution in the northern kingdom, actually seized the throne of Judah and for six years encouraged Baal worship in Jerusalem. But she was overthrown and slain in a priestly revolution [2] which restored the Davidic line, setting up Joash on the throne although he was then only an infant. Under him the repairs of the Temple were taken in hand and the religion purified of many of its corruptions. It was probably during his long reign, under priestly tutelage, that the earliest history of the nation was written down.

His son, Amaziah, seems to have been a man of energy and he restored the sovereignty of Judah over Edom. Elated by this victory he challenged the king of Israel to a trial of strength and was answered contemptuously in one of the most delightful parables in the Old Testament.[3] The outcome was ignominious defeat for the smaller kingdom.

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1 2 Kings 12. 3; 14. 4; and 15. 35.
2 2 Kings 11.
3 See I. R. 22.

Judah under the long and capable rule of Uzziah (782-737 B. C.) shared something of the peace and prosperity that proved such a bane to the moral life of the northern kingdom. Uzziah was able to extend the frontiers of his kingdom and to strengthen its defences. He also developed its internal resources and encouraged foreign commerce. But prosperity brought in its wake the same corruptions and social injustices as in the north, and it was against these that the great statesman-prophet, Isaiah, who in the perspective of history strides like a colossus through the reigns of many of Judah's kings, first raised his voice. Dangers were gathering round the little kingdom ; but its kings and leaders were unaware of them and it was only the inspired vision of Isaiah that discerned the instruments of Yahweh's wrath that were being prepared in distant Assyria.

It was the death of Uzziah (738 B. C.) that roused young Isaiah to his prophetic activity. Pondering over the unfaithfulness of his nation and the dangers overshadowing it, the young man, who himself belonged to the ruling class felt an unmistakable call to be a messenger of warning, God's mouth-piece, to these people with hardened hearts and dulled consciences. The call came to him in a vision of the High and Holy One of Israel, in the Temple whither the young patriot had gone, burdened with the fate of his people.[4] To the Lord's voice asking, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us ? ", young Isaiah responded with a dedication : "Here am I, send me," a dedication to which he remained faithful throughout a long ministry which knew both rejection and

[4] See I. R. 23.

acceptance by his people. The conviction had already become clear to the youthful prophet that only destruction awaited the nation as a whole and that the only hope lay in the survival of a faithful remnant, like the stump of a felled oak, which would sprout again after discipline had done its perfect work.

The earliest theme of Isaiah's preaching was Yahweh's demand of social righteousness from His people. With an unpalatable message to deliver he, like his predecessor Amos, seems to have appeared first at one of the festivals of his people, when he couched his message in a consummate parable. To an audience, composed mainly of vine-dressers or owners of vineyards, he sang his exquisite song about a friend's vineyard.[5] The carefully tended vineyard had yielded only sour grapes. While the audience approved of his friend's decision to pull down its fences and to lay it waste, the prophet pressed home the application of the parable to Judah, which was the Lord's own vineyard and which because of its fruits of corruption and oppression deserved nothing but utter desolation.

Like Hosa, the prophet of God's tender love, Isaiah too had known the strength of family affections. And he used the same simile of unrequited filial love to drive home the lesson of Israel's ingratitude and consequent rejection.[6] It is exceedingly significant that the crimes he denounces are not those of the petty criminals who must have, then as now, figured most prominently before the public eye

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[5] See I. R. 24.
[6] See I. R. 25.

and the law-courts. All his denunciations are directed against the oppressors of the poor and the upholders of established religion. In this he is truly representative of all the great Hebrew prophets, who were, before everything else, champions of social justice and of the religion of righteousness. "Woe to those who join house to house, who add field to field, until there is no space left and ye dwell alone in the land,"[7] he cried out to the capitalists of his generation. What can be more scathing than his denunciation of the State religion of his people: "Hear the word of the Lord: To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? I am full of the burnt offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he-goats.... Yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood. Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil: learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow."[8]

Exactly similar was the teaching of a minor prophet, Micah, who also prophesied about this time. From his home in Mareshah-Gath, an exposed outpost on the Philistine coast, he had discerned the growing power of Assyria, and saw in it an instrument ready prepared in the hand of his God to execute punishment upon guilty Judah. So he too came forward as a tribune of the people to demand justice for the common man in the name of Yahweh. Cannibals, he called the rulers of the nation, who "eat

[7] Israiah 5. 8.
[8] Israiah 1. 10-17.

the flesh of my people; and they flay their skin from off them, and break their bones."[9] He is equally severe upon the priests who teach for hire and the prophets who divine for money.[10] And in words which have become classical he summed up the essence of religion and the whole duty of man towards his God.[11] When two and a half milleniums later, President Eliot of Harvard University was asked to choose a description of true religion to be put upon the walls of the Library of Congress at Washington, it was these words of the obscure prophet of Judah that he selected. "Still the world, Christian and non-Christian alike," comments a modern American prophet,[12] "awaits the time when they shall be understood and translated into life: What doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God."

But to return to his greater contemporary Isaiah. It was two or three great crises in his nation's history that brought Isaiah into prominence and enabled him to leave an indelible mark upon that history. So great was his contribution to the life of his nation and especially of its citadel, Jerusalem, that a great student of the historical geography of Palestine, George Adam Smith, has observed, "Jerusalem may be said to be Isaiah's Jerusalem even more than she was David's or Solomon's." The first crisis occurred in 735 B.C., when Isaiah was still young. The petty States on the Mediterranean coast formed an alliance to check

[9] Micah 3. 3.

[10] Micah 3. 11.

[11] See I. R. 26.

[12] H. E. Fosdick: *A Pilgrimage to Palestine*, p. 160.

the rising power of Assyria. Rezin of Damascus and Pekah of Northern Israel were the leaders in this and they demanded the allegiance of Judah to this league. And the Bible record says that the heart of Ahaz, king of Judah and the heart of his people, was moved as the trees of the forest are moved with the wind. It was at this time that young Isaiah gave the vacillating king his message from Yahweh. Isaiah's advice was that Ahaz should keep aloof from entangling alliances either with Rezin and Pekah or with Assyria. His consecrated common sense told him that Damascus and Samaria were two tails of smoking firebrands, quickly to be extinguished by Assyria, and that the wisest course for Judah was to lie still and await the unfolding of events beyond her puny control. But he warned king and people alike

"If ye will not hold fast,
Verily, ye shall not stand fast."

But Ahaz was not the man to hold fast to his God. He even refused to ask for a sign that the prophet offered to give him "either in the depth or in the height above", to strengthen his weak faith. It was then that the prophet gave him a sign unasked, a sign [13] that has been grossly misinterpreted in Christian times as a prediction of the birth of the Messiah from a virgin. The word used by the prophet, in its Greek translation, was capable of being understood as both a virgin and a woman of marriageable age. Actually the sign was a mark of time, and what the prophet meant was that before a young woman, who could easily be identified by his audience, either the queen or the prophet's own

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13 Isaiah 7. 10-17.

wife, could bring forth a child, a child which could aptly be named *Immanuel*, to symbolize the prophet's message of *God with us*, and before the child could reach years of discretion, the northern confederacy would be broken and Judah herself share its fate if it rejected the prophet's advice. But Ahaz would not listen. Instead, he sought craven protection from Tiglath Pileser of Assyria by paying him a heavy tribute, thus bringing Judah into the vortex of the power-politics of the day.

Isaiah was the one man who saw clearly and counselled aright as to how to steer clear of these entanglements. But his was a lone and unheeded voice. He also laid himself open to the charge of inconsistency by adapting his counsel to the changing situations in and around his nation. For, having once submitted to Assyria, and Assyrian power being in the ascendant throughout the Middle East, Isaiah advised against rebellion. But revolt is sweet to subject races and every opportunity was welcomed to form coalitions against the suzerain power. One of the first of these was organized by Azuri, king of Ashdod, who had the backing of Assyria's rival, Egypt (711 B.C.). Judah was on the point of joining the conspiracy when Isaiah resorted to the desperate device of throwing off his prophet's mantle and his sandals, and going about in the garb of a bare-footed captive, as an object lesson to his people of the consequences of revolt against Assyria.[14] The effort succeeded and the nation was saved for the time being.

The Bible mentions, and the inscriptions of

[14] Isaiah 20. 3.

Sargon of Assyria confirm another rebellion under the leadership of Merodoch-Baladan of Babylon. King Hezekiah of Judah received favourably the overtures of the Babylonian adventurer, but once again Isaiah's counsels prevailed and another tragedy was averted.

The assassination of Sargon in 705 B.C. was the occasion for another revolt. This time Judah was implicated. But Sargon was succeeded on the Assyrian throne by an even more energetic conqueror, Sennacherib, and the rebellion was ruthlessly suppressed. The consequences to Judah of this folly are inscribed for all time on the famous *Taylor Prism*,[15] or hexagonal cylinder of Sennacherib, now in the British Museum: "As for Hezekiah the Jew, who did not submit to my yoke, forty-six of his strong walled cities, as well as the small cities in their neighbourhood which were without number, with assault and battering-rams and approach of siege-engines, with the attack of infantry, of mines . . . . I besieged and captured. Two hundred thousand, one hundred and fifty persons, young and old, male and female, horses, mules, asses, camels, oxen and sheep, without number, from their midst I brought out and counted them as spoil." The boastful inscription continues: "I shut him up like a bird in a cage in the midst of Jerusalem, his royal city."

This was in 701 B.C. This has been commonly regarded as the occasion for Isaiah's counsel of quiet confidence in Yahweh and of a miraculous deliverance of the city. But neither the Biblical nor the Assyrian records suggest any overwhelming calamity

15 See *Bible and Spade*, p. 157.

overtaking Sennacherib's army in 701 B.C. The best explanation seems to be that the account of Isaiah's effective counsel recorded in 2 Kings 18 & 19 and in the parallel passages of Isaiah 36 & 37, refers to a later campaign of Sennacherib about the year 690 B.C. This is confirmed by the testimony of Herodotus. This campaign was primarily against Egypt, but Sennacherib, in order to safeguard his rear, might have wanted to reduce the fortress of Jerusalem, which however had not rebelled this time. He sent his officers with an army to demand the unconditional surrender of the city, hurling defiance at Judah and its God. In his dismay Hezekiah turned for advice to the venerable prophet, now turned grey in the service of his nation. And Isaiah's reply was reassuring to king and people. Throughout his long career he had preached calm reliance upon the Holy One of Israel. "In quietness and confidence shall be your strength,"[16] had been his unfailing prescription for the ills of his people. "Trust ye in the Lord for ever; for the Lord Yahweh is an everlasting rock. Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee,"[17] he had assured the people earlier. This time the Assyrian had made an unprovoked assault upon Judah. And so, Isaiah argued, Assyria was courting its own destruction. "The axe was vaunting itself over Him who hewed therewith and the saw was magnifying itself over Him who wielded it; and therefore the yoke of the Assyrian will be lifted off the neck of the captive."[18] The

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[16] Isaiah 30. 15.
[17] Isaiah 26. 3 &4.
[18] Isaiah 10. 15.

Biblical record speaks of sudden destruction overtaking the besieging army, so that they retreated pell-mell. Herodotus' account tells us that "there came in the night a multitude of field-mice, which devoured all the quivers and the bowstrings of the enemy and ate the thongs by which they managed their shields."[19] Evidently it was an attack of plague that caused the sudden withdrawal of the enemy from the gates of Jerusalem. The aged prophet's counsel was dramatically vindicated and there grew up the legend that Jerusalem, Yahweh's city, was inviolable.

Isaiah is rightly recognized as the greatest statesman of Judah's history. "He stands before all ages and races as an example of that noblest type of patriotism which hesitates not to face squarely unpalatable facts, to challenge injustice and corruption in high places, to labour unceasingly for the realization of God's will and thus in the end to save and upbuild a nation."[20]

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19 C. F. Kent: *The Historical Bible* vol. 3, pp. 176 f.
20 Ibid., p. 180.

22. *Presumption Snubbed* (2 Kings 14. 8-10).

Then Amaziah sent messengers to Jehoash, the son of Jehoahaz son of Jehu, king of Israel, saying, Come, let us look one another in the face. And Jehoash the king of Israel sent to Amaziah king of Judah, saying, The thistle that was in Lebanon, sent to the Cedar that was in Lebanon, saying, Give thy daughter to my son to wife: and there passed by a wild beast that was in Lebanon, and trode down the thistle. Thou hast indeed smitten Edom, and thine heart hath lifted thee up: glory thereof, and abide at home; for why shouldst thou meddle to thy hurt, that thou shouldst fall, even thou and Judah with thee?

23. *Isaiah's Vision* (Isaiah 6. 1-13).

In the year that king Uzziah died I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. Above him stood the seraphim: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory. And the foundations of the thresholds were moved at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke. Then said I, woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts. Then flew one of the seraphim unto me, having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar: and he touched my mouth with it, and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin is purged. And I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then I said, Here am I; send me. And he said, Go, and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not. Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and turn again and be healed.

Then said I, Lord, how long? And he answered, Until cities be waste without inhabitant, and houses without man, and the land become utterly waste, and the Lord have removed men far away, and the forsaken places be many in the midst of the land. And if there be yet a tenth in it, it shall again be eaten up: as a terebinth and as an oak, whose stock remaineth, when they are felled; so the holy seed is the stock thereof.

24. *The Song of the Vineyard* (Isaiah 5. 1-7 *).

Let me sing of my Friend,
    sing a love-song of his vineyard:
My friend, he had a vineyard,
    on a fruitful slope:
He dug it, cleared the stones away,
    he planted the pick of the vines,
In it he built a watch-tower,
    and had a winepress hewn;
Then he looked for good grapes,
    and it bore him wild grapes!
"Now, dwellers in Jerusalem,
    now, men of Judah,
Pray judge between me
    and my vineyard.
What more could I have done for it?
    what have I left undone?
And when I looked for good grapes,
    why did it bear wild grapes?
Let me tell you now
    what I will do to this my vineyard —
Tear it down till it is ruined,
    break its wall down till it lies trampled.
I'll make an end of it;
    unpruned, unweeded,
It shall be overgrown with thorns and thistles,
    and I will bid the clouds drop no rain on it."
The Eternal's vineyard is the house of Israel,
    the men of Judah are his dear plantation:
He looked for justice — and lo, bloodshed!
    for right — and lo, shrieks from the wronged!

* This is Moffatt's translation.

25. *Unrequited Fatherly Love* (Isaiah 1. 2-9).

Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth, for the Lord hath spoken: I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me. The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib: but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider. Ah sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evil-doers, children that deal corruptly: they have forsaken the Lord, they have despised the Holy One of Israel, they are estranged and gone backward. Why will ye be still stricken, that ye revolt more and more? the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it; but wounds and bruises, and festering sores; they have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with oil. Your country is desolate; your cities are burned with fire; your land, strangers devour it in your presence, and it is desolate, as overthrown by strangers. And the daughter of Zion is left as a booth in a vineyard, as a lodge in a garden of cucumbers, as a besieged city. Except the Lord of hosts had left unto us a very small remnant, we should have been as Sodom, we should have been like unto Gomorrah.

26. *True Religion* (Micah 6. 6-8).

Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?

CHAPTER VIII

KINGS AND PROPHETS OF JUDAH — II

(686-587 B.C.)

Jeremiah

Isaiah's long prophetic career had ended in a blaze of glory, with the miraculous deliverance of Jerusalem from the Assyrian invader. But even that did not prevent a strong reaction that set in after the death of the good king Hezekiah. Hezekiah's son, Manasseh, was only twelve years old when he began his long reign of fifty-five years. He seems to have been very much under the influence of the women of the harem, those fatted kine of Bashan,[1] against whom the great prophets had thundered some of their severest denunciations, for being the devotees of the old Canaanite superstitions. It must have been under their influence that not only was the ancient Baal worship restored, but new cults of the sun and the moon, of Babylonian origin, were introduced into Jerusalem. We are told that the king made his son to pass through the fire and practised witchcraft and appointed mediums and wizards.[2] He even set up an Ashera, or sacred pole, and horses dedicated to the sun, within the Temple courts.. To the common people, who had been deeply corrupted by the Canaanitish cults, he might have seemed a champion of traditional practices, for under him, in subjection to

1 Amos 4. 1.

2 2 Kings 21. 6.

the suzerain power of Assyria, the kingdom enjoyed long and undisturbed peace.

The period of Manasseh's reign witnessed the height of the Assyrian power. One of the inscriptions of Esarhaddon (c. 678 B.C.) tells of his summoning twenty-two subject kings, including Manasseh of Judah, and giving them orders. To his son, Ashurbanipal, all students of Biblical and Assyrian history are indebted for the great collection he made of all that was best in the ancient Mesopotamian writings in his famous library at Nineveh. His own inscriptions reveal a very human personality, who sought relief from the tedium of overmuch reading in making the wheels of his chariot go round, and the scene of whose happy feasting with his queen is the one pleasant relief in much that is harsh and cruel in Assyrian art.[3]

With his death in 626 B.C. began the rapid decline of Assyria. The empire was weakened by the inroads of the marauding Scythians from the north, the trampling of whose horsehoofs we hear distinctly in the oracles of some of the Hebrew prophets of the day. About 606 B.C. Nineveh, the proud mistress of south-western Asia for over a century, fell, never again to rise, before the combined attack of the Chaldeans and the Medes.

The triumph-song over the fall of Judah's ancient foe is found in the prophecy of Nahum.[4] "Nineveh the mighty has fallen," sang the prophet. Contemplating the rise and fall of that mighty empire, the prophets of the Assyrian period rose to

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[3] *Bible and Spade*, pp. 166f.

[4] I. R. 27.

the conception of a God of the whole universe, who uses those He chooses as the instruments of His purposes and casts aside those who vaunt themselves above the one real Dispenser of Justice.

This teaching of the great prophets of the Assyrian period was so vital and dynamic that no royal reaction could stamp it out from the nation's memory. Manasseh, we are told,[5] put to death many of the prophets of Yahweh. But there undoubtedly remained a faithful remnant who did not bow the knee to Baal and who treasured the teachings of the great prophets. Perhaps the earliest collections of the writings of those masters were made during this reactionary period. That the prophetic party were working underground and preparing for a counter-revolution is evident from the signal success they achieved in the reign of Manasseh's grandson, Josiah.

The Prophetic Reformation carried through during this reign is one of the most glorious incidents in Judah's history, and it has left its deep impress on all that subsequent history. Josiah was only eight years old when he began to reign in 639 B.C. Perhaps he had as his tutor the prophet Zephaniah, whose descent is traced back to king Hezekiah. Zephaniah's prophecy was a call to repentance and a message of warning, most probably inspired by the descent of the dreaded Scythians along the coastal plains of Palestine, as far as the borders of Egypt. "Seek ye the Lord, all ye meek of the earth, which have wrought His judgment, seek righteousness, seek meekness: it may be ye shall be hid in the day of the Lord's anger,"[6] cried out the prophet.

[5] Jeremiah 2. 30.

[6] Zeph. 2. 3.

The call to repentance under the threat of the foe from the north was also sounded by a far greater prophet than Zephaniah, indeed one of the greatest in all Jewish history, Jeremiah of Anathoth. He appears to have been very young when he was roused to prophetic activity by the situation threatening his beloved nation. For he touchingly pleads his youth and inexperience when the imperious call of Yahweh comes to him to be a prophet to his people.[7] If ever there was a man set apart from his youth, nay even from his mother's womb, to be a servant of God, a shy and shrinking soul, craving for the joys and relaxations of domestic happiness, but doomed to forgo them all because of a divine commission laid on him, which bade him "nor sit nor stand but go", and made strong as steel, nay as a fortified city to withstand the buffetings of time and circumstance, that man was Jeremiah. Time and again we hear him bemoan his destiny, protesting against the God who had mastered him, yet ever bracing himself to fresh adventures in the strength of the power working within him. "Thou hast beguiled me, O Yahweh, and I let myself be beguiled; for thou art stronger than I and hast prevailed," he cried out once,[8] in the agony of his desolation at the treatment he received at the hands of the people to whom he had been sent. "For as often as I speak, I am an object of laughter. For the word of Yahweh hath become to me a cause of reproach and derision all the day. But if I say, I will not think of it nor speak any more in his name, then there is in my heart, as

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7 I. R. 28.

8 Jeremiah 20. 7-10.

it were a burning fire shut up in my bones. And I am weary of enduring, I cannot longer bear it; for I hear defaming of many, terror on every side." But on every such occasion his faith triumphed and he rose equal to its demands. For it was also his experience that "the Lord is with me as a mighty one and a terrible; therefore my persecutors shall stumble and they shall not prevail."

But the worst of these experiences, which made duty a torture to him and which have earned for him the title of the weeping prophet,[9] were yet to come. For the moment, his reform sermons and those of Zephaniah had their effect and the whole nation, under the lead of the young king Josiah, turned to the Lord as never before in their history. The prophetic party staged their come-back in a dramatic and skilful manner. A Book of the Law was 'discovered' within the Temple-walls when these were being repaired under orders of the king. The book was read before the king and it came to him as a new revelation from Yahweh, for in it were condemnations of existing evils and new prescriptions for a social order hitherto unknown among the Jews. The king rent his clothes as a sign of penitence. The authenticity of the book was referred to a prophetess, Huldah,[10] and she confirmed it as a sure word from Yahweh. It is now admitted by all serious students of the Bible that this new discovery was nothing but

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[9] The Book of Lamentations attributed to Jeremiah in the Bible is now admitted to be not by him and to date much later than his time. Jeremiah's prophecies are anything but a 'Jeremiad' in the ordinary sense, though there are in them pathetic self-revelations like the one quoted in the text above.

[10] 2 Kings 22. 14-20.

the present Book of Deuteronomy, at least its kernel in chapters 12 to 26. Although it was ascribed to acceptance, it was most certainly a work of this the ancient Law-giver, to gain for it authority and acceptance, it was most certainly a work of this period, for the crimes it condemns and the situation it visualizes are those of the reactionary period under Manasseh. It demanded the removal of the Asherah and the images of the sun and moon that Manasseh had set up within the Temple, the stamping out of the worship carried on at the high-places, with many of which even prophets like Samuel and Elisha were associated, and the centralization of all Yahweh worship in the Jerusalem Temple, "the place where Yahweh shall choose to have his name dwell".[11] It also gave detailed prescriptions for the keeping of three great annual festivals — the Passover, the Feast of Weeks and the Feast of Tabernacles — which have acted as great binding forces in the life of the nation ever since.

But the Deuteronomic code did much more than condemn existing corruptions in worship and prescribe correct forms of ritual observances. It also laid down detailed regulations for the moral and social life of the nation, making the reformation it initiated a perfect blending of the best elements in the priestly as well as the prophetic traditions of the nation. It is in the humane regulations it elaborated that it set up a standard of social morality that has not been surpassed or equalled in any time or place, Christian or non-Christian. It is as elaborate and detailed as, and in its respect for human personality more

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[11] Deuteronomy 12. 5; 16. 2.

advanced than, the celebrated *Dharma-Sutras* of India.[12] Thus, for example, there are special provisions that safeguard the rights of the widow and the fatherless, of the slave and the resident alien. Even the claims of the beasts of the field are not forgotten: "Thou shalt not muzzle the ox when it treadeth out the grain."[13] Truly could the authors of the book claim that in it were contained the words of life, to reject which meant choosing death: "I call heaven and earth to witness against you this day, that I have set before thee life and death, the blessing and the curse: therefore choose life, that thou mayest live, thou and thy seed."[14]

Under its inspiration Josiah carried through a reformation that purified the religion and ennobled the life of the nation. The high-places were all desecrated, the Temple was cleansed of all the paraphernalia of heathen cults and the Temple worship itself organized and regulated as never before. Josiah purged parts of the northern kingdom also of traces of foreign worship, smashing up the ancient sanctuary of Bethel. The decline of the Assyrian power perhaps enabled him to extend his sway over the remnants of northern Israel. Thus it would seem that Josiah's reign revived and realized many of the popular hopes suggested by the never-to-be-forgotten glories of the days of David.

It was perhaps over-confidence in the protecting care of Yahweh, for whom he had been so zealous, that led the good king to venture upon the hazardous enterprise of resisting Pharaoh Necho of Egypt, who

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12 I. R. 29; Deut. 24. 17-32.

13 Deut. 25. 4.

14 Deut. 30. 19.

emboldened no doubt by the weakness of Assyria was setting out at this time on a career of conquest. Josiah met him on the field of Megiddo and was slain in battle in 608 B.C. Jeremiah is significantly silent regarding this tragedy. By the people at large it might have been interpreted as a divine rebuke for the iconoclastic fervour of the king. The sequel at any rate was a revival of heathenism under a new king, Jehoiakim, who ruled as Pharaoh Necho's protege. Jeremiah could not but regard this as apostasy to the nation's God and his voice was raised in strong and constant protest against the folly of king and people. " My people have committed two evils," he cries out in the name of Yahweh, " they have forsaken me the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water." [15] The rest of the story of the southern kingdom gathers round the tragic figure of Jeremiah.

A typical instance of Jeremiah's preaching and its reception is recorded in vivid detail. [16] Standing at the gate of the Temple, in obedience to divine injunctions, he declared to the assembled worshippers : " Amend your ways and your doings. Trust ye not in lying words, saying, The Temple of the Lord, The Temple of the Lord, The Temple of the Lord....If ye thoroughly execute judgment between a man and his neighbour, if ye oppress not the stranger, the fatherless and the widow, and shed not innocent blood in this place, neither walk after other gods to your own hurt : then I will cause you to dwell in this place, in the land

[15] Jeremiah 2. 13.
[16] Jeremiah 7. 1-15.

that I gave to your fathers, from of old even for evermore." This was in pointed reference to the legend that had grown up regarding the inviolability of the sacred sanctuary as a result of its miraculous deliverance as predicted by the great Isaiah. But Jeremiah had the courage to correct this false belief and in proof thereof he bade his hearers to go and see what the Lord had done to "Shiloh, where I caused my name to dwell at first". "Therefore will I do to this house, which is called by my name, wherein ye trust, as I have done to Shiloh. And I will cast you out of my sight, as I have cast out all your brethren, even the whole seed of Ephraim."

Words like these no defendant of the established order could brook. We are told that when Jeremiah finished his speaking the priests and the prophets and all the people laid hold of him, saying, "Thou shalt surely die."[17] Jeremiah's reply to his accusers is characteristic of the man and justifies the identification of him as the original of the Ideal, Suffering Servant of Yahweh, so vividly portrayed in the Servant Poems of a later prophet, now generally known as the Second Isaiah.[18] "As for me, behold, I am in your hands: do with me as is good and right in your eyes. Only know ye for certain that, if ye put me to death, ye shall bring innocent blood upon yourselves: for of a truth the Lord hath sent me unto you to speak all these words in your ears."[19]

The intervention of some of the princes, who had stood by Josiah in his reforms, saved Jeremiah

17 Jeremiah 26. 8.

18 I. R. 30.

19 Jer. 26. 14 & 15.

from death on this occasion. They cited precedents of earlier prophets declaring doom and of such doom being averted because king and people listened to their words. Instances were not wanting, however, of daring prophets sealing their testimony with their blood.

But Jeremiah was a man who could not be silenced. The word of the Lord was as a burning fire within him and he must out with it. Buying an earthen bottle from a potter, he took the elders of the priests and of the people to the valley of Hinnom and there broke the bottle before them as a symbol of Yahweh's breaking of the nation in the near future. The valley itself was to become the Valley of Slaughter, the smouldering dung-heap of Jerusalem, which in later Jewish thought was the symbol of Hell. The infuriated chief priest smote the prophet and put him in the public stocks for a whole day. [20]

Invaluable light on the manner in which the prophetic word was reduced to writing is provided in an account of one of Jeremiah's many encounters with king Jehoiakim.[21] The defeat of his overlord, Pharaoh Necho, in the decisive battle of Carchemish in 605 B.C. at the hands of the rising Chaldean power must have made king and court so sensitive to criticism that even Jeremiah considered it unsafe to appear in person before the king. But he wanted to make another appeal to the nation to turn from their evil ways. So, we are told, he called unto him a scribe, Baruch by name, and caused him to write to dictation all the words that Yahweh had spoken

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[20] Jer. 19.
[21] Jer. 36.

through him from the beginning up to date. And Baruch read the scroll in the hearing of the people in the house of the Lord on a day of public fasting. The princes of the court were so impressed by the words that they wanted them to be read before the king. But they took the wise precaution of sending Jeremiah and Baruch into hiding before the scroll was presented to the king. The king's reaction to it was what they had anticipated. He would not even listen to the whole scroll, but after three or four leaves of it had been read he cut it with a penknife and cast it into the brazier by which his chamber was heated. But Jeremiah was not the man to be dismayed either by rejection or contempt. When he heard that the king had destroyed the roll he took "another roll, and gave it to Baruch, the scribe, the son of Neriah; who wrote therein from the mouth of Jeremiah all the words of the book which Jehoiakim, king of Judah, had burned in the fire; and there were added besides unto them many like words."[22] And similar words continued to be added, both during the lifetime of the prophet and later, to make the Book of Jeremiah the longest and most complex of all the Old Testament prophetic books. Most of the other books of the prophets must have been written by similar methods and for similar reasons.

Events in the outer world were swiftly moving to write the finale to the tragedy of the little kingdom of Judah. The battle of Carchemish was one of the most decisive battles of history, for it gave the knock-out blow to Egypt as a great power. In its victor,

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[22] Jer. 36. 32.

Nebuchadrezzar, Babylon had found its ablest ruler since the days of the great Hammurabi. He swiftly reduced to subjection all the small kingdoms on the east Mediterranean coast. Jehoiakim of Judah also surrendered, but four years later he rebelled. The Chaldean soldiers left behind by the conqueror, with the aid of the other subject States, sufficed to put down this rebellion for the time being. But continued revolts, in spite of the wise counsels of Jeremiah, brought finally Nebuchadrezzar himself to his first siege and capture of the city in 597 B.C. Jehoiachin, who by this time had succeeded his father, surrendered and was carried away captive, along with a large number of his nobles and skilled workmen. This was the first Babylonian captivity.

Compared with these first captives, the picked men of the nation, Jeremiah declared that those who were left behind were bad figs, so bad that they could not be eaten. His hopes for the restoration of the nation rested entirely on the exiles of 597, to whom he wrote a famous letter,[23] asking them to settle down peacefully in the land and to look forward to a return home after seventy years. His estimate of the remnant in Palestine was absolutely correct. Under a weak king, Zedekiah, set up by Nebuchadrezzar, the courtiers continually plotted rebellion against Babylon. To this they were urged by the false prophets who throughout Jewish history figured side by side with the true ones. Many are the clashes recorded between the two in that history. The people, of course, had difficulty in distinguishing between them, for both types used the same vocabulary and claimed the same divine authority. Because of this,

[23] Jer. 29. 1-4.

the influence of the false prophets was most pernicious, for they undermined the authority of the true and created confusion in the popular mind. So it was most essential that they should be challenged and exposed, and that was what the true prophets always did when confronted by them. A dramatic conflict between the two is recorded in the book of Jeremiah. Jeremiah had, on one occasion, made for himself a yoke of wood and put it on his neck, as a symbol of subjection to the king of Babylon, which was the wisest policy for Judah at the time. But a false prophet, Hananiah, one who prophesied: Peace, Peace, when there is no peace,[24] took the yoke from Jeremiah's neck and broke it in the presence of all the people, saying, "Even so will Yahweh break the yoke of the king of Babylon from the necks of all people."[25] Jeremiah went quietly home. But soon after the word of the Lord came to him: "Go and say to Hananiah, Thus saith Yahweh: Thou hast broken the yoke of wood, but I will make in its stead one of iron." The final vindication of a prophet is the fulfilment of his word, and by that test Jeremiah and his great predecessors in the true prophetic line stand absolutely vindicated.

But it was little use Jeremiah wearing his soul out in watching over and warning a recalcitrant people. Zedekiah rebelled in 588 B.C. along with other Palestinian kings and that brought the Chaldean armies again into the land. Because of its natural defences Jerusalem was able to stand a long siege. In his extremity king Zedekiah, who himself was not unfavourably inclined towards Jeremiah, sent to the

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24 Jer. 6. 14; 8. 11.
25 Jer. 28. 1-17.

prophet expecting a message of hope and perhaps of miraculous deliverance. But Jeremiah could only counsel surrender, for he saw clearly that Yahweh himself had set his face against the corrupt nation. The extent of their corruption is seen from the fact that, when in seeming response to their last-minute attempt to purchase Yahweh's favour by setting free their slaves the Assyrian armies retired for a time, they forthwith enslaved the freed people. The brutality of their treatment of the now aged prophet also bears witness to their utter degradation. This patriot with the bleeding heart, who had consistently sought the welfare of his nation, was accused of being a traitor, of weakening the hands of the people by counsels of despair. He had on the contrary sought to provide an object lesson of his abiding faith in the future of his people in their own land, by purchasing an ancestral field even during the siege. In spite of the king's protection he was cast into a vile cistern, where he would have died of starvation if he had not been rescued by a faithful foreign eunuch, with the connivance of the king.

Complete, ruthless destruction could be the only fate of a nation that had so grossly sinned against the light. And that fate soon overtook the kingdom. The Chaldean battering-rams broke down the walls of Jerusalem in 586 B.C., and at the orders of the conqueror the whole city was destroyed, all its treasures carried away and the Temple and the royal palace given to the flames. Zedekiah, who sought to escape, was captured, his sons were slain in his presence, his eyes were then put out and he, his women and nobles were all carried away to captivity. Jeremiah was given the option of remaining behind

in Jerusalem or accompanying the conquerors to Babylon. The old patriot chose to remain in the land he loved. An honourable man, Gedeliah, was put in charge of what remained of the kingdom. But he was soon treacherously slain by a few conspirators. The frightened supporters of Gedeliah fled to Egypt, forcing Jeremiah to go along with them. A late tradition states that he met with a martyr's death at the hands of his own countrymen in Egypt.

Thus ended Judah's existence as a kingdom and the tragic career of one of Israel's greatest sons and one of her greatest religious teachers. In his teachings and even more in his life of vicarious suffering, he was a forerunner of the greatest of them all, Jesus of Nazareth. Jeremiah was preeminently the prophet who proclaimed the religion of the heart, which is independent of all external authority, whether of Church or of Scripture. The height of his insight was reached in his vision of a time when Yahweh will make a New Covenant[26] with his people, a covenant, written not on tablets of stone, as was the old covenant, but on the hearts of his faithful people. Religion, as he experienced it and declared it to be, is in essence an inner spiritual illumination, imparted directly by the Light that lighteth every man coming into the world. The charter of the Religion of the Spirit that Jesus affirmed over five hundred years later, that "God is spirit and they that worship him must worship in spirit and in truth,"[27] was but the fulfilment of the new covenant that Jeremiah foresaw.

26 I. R. 31.
27 St. John 4. 24.

Illustrative Readings

27. *The Fall of Nineveh* (Nahum 2. 8-12 *).

But Nineveh is like a pool of water,
Her waters are flowing away.
Stand, stand (one cries), but not one turns back.
Loot the silver, loot the gold;
For there is no end to the store,
The wealth of all precious things.
She is empty and desolate and waste!
The heart faints, the knees smite together,
Anguish is in all loins,
And the faces of all are flushed.
Where is the den of the lions,
The lair of the young lions,
Where the lion was wont to withdraw,
The whelps also with none to startle them?
The lion tore in pieces enough for his whelps,
And strangled for his mates,
He filled his caves with prey,
And his lairs with plunder.

28. *The Call of Jeremiah* (Jeremiah 1. 4-10).

Now the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee, and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee; I have appointed thee a prophet unto the nations. Then said I, Ah, Lord God! behold, I cannot speak: for I am a child. But the Lord said unto me, Say not, I am a child: for to whomsoever I shall send thee thou shalt go, and whatsoever I shall command thee thou shalt speak. Be not afraid because of them: for I am with thee to deliver thee, saith the Lord. Then the Lord put forth his hand, and touched my mouth; and the Lord said unto me, Behold, I have put my word in thy mouth: see, I have set thee this day over the nations and over the kingdoms, to pluck up and to

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* This translation is that of C. F. Kent in The Historical Bible vol. III, p. 183.

break down and to destroy and to overthrow; to build, and to plant.

29. *Humane Regulations* (Deuteronomy 24. 17-22).

Thou shalt not wrest the judgment of the stranger, nor of the fatherless; nor take the widow's raiment to pledge: but thou shalt remember that thou wast a bondman in Egypt, and the Lord thy God redeemed thee thence: therefore I command thee to do this thing. When thou reapest thine harvest in thy field, and has forgot a sheaf in the field, thou shalt not go again to fetch it: it shall be for the stranger, for the fatherless, and for the widow: that the Lord thy God may bless thee in all the work of thine hands. When thou beatest thine olive tree, thou shalt not go over the boughs again: it shall be for the stranger, for the fatherless, and for the widow. When thou gatherest the grapes of thy vineyard, thou shalt not glean it after thee: it shall be for the stranger, for the fatherless, and for the widow. And thou shalt remember that thou wast a bondman in the land of Egypt: therefore I command thee to do this thing.

30. *The Suffering Servant of Yahweh* (Isaiah 53. 3-12 *).

He was despised and shunned by men,
a man of pain who knew what sickness was;
Like one from whom men turn with shuddering,
he was despised, we took no heed of him.
And yet ours was the pain he bore,
the sorrow he endured!
We thought him suffering from a stroke
at God's own hand;
Yet he was wounded because we had sinned,
't was our misdeeds that crushed him;
't was for our welfare that he was chastised,
the blows that fell to him have brought us healing.
Like sheep we had all gone astray,
we had each taken his own way,
And on him the Eternal laid
the guilt of all of us.

* This translation is from Moffatt's Bible.

He was ill-treated, yet he bore it humbly,
he never would complain,
Dumb as a sheep led to the slaughter,
dumb as a ewe before the shearers.
They did away with him unjustly;
and who heeded how he fell,
Torn from the land of the living,
struck down for sins of ours?
They laid him in a felon's grave,
and buried him with criminals,
Though he was guilty of no violence,
nor had he uttered one false word.
But the Eternal chose to vindicate his servant,
rescuing his life from anguish;
He let him prosper to the full,
in a posterity with life prolonged.
Yes, many shall hold my servant blameless,
since 'twas their sins he bore.
Therefore shall he win victory,
he shall succeed triumphantly,
Since he has shed his life-blood,
and let himself be numbered among rebels,
bearing the great world's sins,
and interposing for rebellious men.

31. *The New Covenant* (Jeremiah 31. 33-34).

But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my law in their inward parts, and in their heart will I write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people: and they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord: for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin will I remember no more.

CHAPTER IX

THE GREAT EXILE: THE BEGINNINGS OF JUDAISM

Ezekiel, 2nd Isaiah, Nehemiah & Ezra

The destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians in 586 B.C. marked the end of the old Hebrew kingdoms and the beginning of that new and important factor in human history known as Judaism. It started the great Dispersion of the Jews which has taken that remarkable people to all corners of the world. The exiles that returned from the Babylonian captivity, to rebuild their temple and city, were a small minority of the nation. But exile and suffering only knit the Jews closer together, against the danger of being engulfed in an alien world, and in time made Judaism that solid, unbreakable rock that has withstood the assaults and the distintegrating forces of the ages. This process was greatly furthered by the elaborate codifications of the Law and its rigid enforcement by the priestly scribes and reformers who flourished during the Babylonian and Persian periods of Hebrew history. Most of the nation's earlier annals were chronicled and the books of the Law and the Prophets compiled during this period. The deepest insights into the ways of Providence and of the function and destiny of their nation were also gained during this period of suffering and enforced reflection. The Great Exile, under Babylon and Persia, was thus a very formative

period in the long story of this nation which still clings to its faith in a special divine choice and vocation.

The prophetic tradition in Hebrew history was carried into exile by the priest-prophet Ezekiel. The first period of his activity fell between the first captivity in 597 B. C. and the final destruction of Jerusalem in 586 B.C. He, like Jeremiah, had to contend against the false prophets who incited the remnant in Judea to rebel and fostered among the exiles in Babylon hopes of an early restoration. Through many symbolic acts and acted parables he sought to convey the message that in submission to Babylon lay the one hope of survival for what remained of the kingdom. Communications seem to have been very close between the exiles and their kinsmen in Palestine. Most of the prophet's earlier oracles were meant for the Jews in Jerusalem. The most striking of all his acted sermons was his breaking through the wall of his house on the banks of the Chebar in Babylon and fleeing with all his possessions as a fugitive, the lesson implied being that a similar fate would overtake the Jews in Palestine if they rebelled against Babylon. But appeal and exhortion fell on deaf ears and little Judah under Zedekiah revolted and was wiped out, as has already been recorded.

With Ezekiel there enters a new conception of the prophetic office and a new understanding of the responsibilities of the individual. With the nation destroyed, the fate of the individual looms larger. The question poignantly raised by the suffering remnant was, why should the children suffer for the wrongs of the parents ? : "The fathers have eaten sour grapes and the children's teeth are set on edge !"

To this proverb Ezekiel's answer was: "The soul that sinneth it shall die."[1] This is the beginning of the growth of the perception of individual responsibility in Hebrew thought, which till then had been solely dominated by the idea of national solidarity. The Ten Commandments had declared that Yahweh is a jealous God visiting the sins of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generations. But experience of national calamity and unmerited personal suffering made them probe deeper into the problem of evil. This is the specific theme of the superb drama of the Book of Job,[2] written later during the same period.

Consistent with his theory of individual responsibility, Ezekiel arrived at a new conception of the prophetic office.[3] With him the spokesman of Yahweh becomes also a shepherd and watchman of souls, commissioned to warn the wicked to turn from his evil ways and to watch over the righteous lest he depart from his righteousness.

Ezekiel is also the prophet of the transcendant holiness of God. The vision[4] that he sees of Yahweh at the outset of his prophetic career is one of the most majestic and luminous in all Old Testament literature. It is full of the *mysterium tremendum* of the Eternal. The splendour and the omniscience of the Divine were felt and expressed by the prophet through symbolism, in which Ezekiel excels over all other Hebrew prophets. The words of the Lord which he was commissioned to declare came to him in a scroll

1 Ezekiel 18. 1-4.

2 See the supplementary note at the end of this chapter.

3 Ezekiel 3. 16-21.

4 I. R. 32.

that he was bidden to swallow, and "it was in my mouth as honey for sweetness." [5]

His was mainly a message of consolation and hope for his people. In a wonderful vision he saw the resurrected glory of his down-trodden people. He saw himself in a valley full of bones and was bidden to call upon the dry bones to assemble themselves and to stand upon their feet. And lo, the breath came into them and they lived and stood upon their feet, an exceeding great army.[6] It can easily be imagined what a tonic effect such a message of hope and restoration would have had upon a down-trodden nation.

But a true prophet of God, Ezekiel was more interested in the spiritual than the physical resurrection of his nation. A priest by training, his vision of the restoration centred on a rebuilt Temple, with its precincts guarded against anything that defiles, and its sanctity and worship maintained with all the resources of the resurrected state. Even the Prince in the restored kingdom becomes chiefly the guardian of the Temple. In place of the monarchy appears the hierarchy and instead of the king the high-priest becomes both the religious and the civil head of the nation. It was a very elaborate plan of the building and of the ritual of the Temple that this priest-prophet drew up in the land of his exile. Though his vision was not fully realized it gave such a turn to the future course of his nation that in a real sense Ezekiel may be called the Father of Judaism.

While the main body of the exiles in Babylon were thus being watched over and sustained by

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[5] Ezekiel 3.3.

[6] Ezekiel 37.

prophets like Ezekiel, a small band of refugees were establishing themselves in Egypt. Their fortunes are wholly unrecorded in the Bible. But records discovered in Egypt have thrown valuable light on their existence as well as on events in Palestine during the years of the restoration. There seems to have been a prosperous colony of Jews on the island of Elephantine on the Upper Nile. In recently discovered Aramaic documents on papyrus there are many references to Yahu, the god they worshipped. Most interesting of all is an Aramaic letter discovered on the site and dated 408 B.C. which complains to Bagohi, the Persian governor of Judea, about a threatened destruction of their temple to Yahu. This temple is said to have long been in existence. Thus throughout the period of the Babylonian Exile there was apparently a Temple of Yahweh, and that in Egypt!

The years of captivity in Babylon played a great part in turning the Jews into a literary people, centring their life for all later times round their sacred scriptures. The destruction of their kingdom, and especially of the Temple at Jerusalem which under the Deuteronomic revolution had become the one and only shrine of Yahweh worship, led them to rally round what remained of their faith, the Laws of their great law-giver Moses and the oracles of their prophets. Association with the Babylonians, who were the most outstanding literary people of the ancient world, greatly helped in this transformation. It was during this period that the laws of Moses, embodied in the Pentateuch, received their full, though not final, form. The latest addition to them was the Priestly Code. The kernel of this is

the "Holiness Code", found in chapters 17-26 of the Book of Leviticus. The main idea embodied in it is that of the holiness of Yahweh, and great insistence is laid on ceremonial and ritual purity. The influence of the priest-prophet Ezekiel is clearly marked in it. Along with its insistence on ritual purity, it repeats and enforces many of the regulations for social justice in the earlier Deuteronomic code. The priestly school of writers were not content with adding to and elaborating the regulations of the Mosaic Law, but they also touched up and rewrote in part the history of their nation. The Books of Chronicles, covering much the same period as that of the books of the Kings and the Prophets, is history, not so much as it happened, but as the priestly chronicler wanted it to appear in the light of later conceptions of Yahweh-worship.

Forming part of what may be called the "Ecclesiastical History of Jerusalem" are two books which are of great historical interest. These are the books of Nehemiah and Ezra. In them, too, we get history coloured by the conceptions of the Chronicler, but there are not in the Bible parallel records, as in the case of the earlier periods, wherewith to check and correct them. The records of the addresses of two minor prophets, Haggai and Zechariah, who laboured about the time of the liberation of the Jews under the Persian Emperor Cyrus (538 B.C.), do throw some light on this period.

Cyrus, the Persian conqueror of Babylon, stands out in ancient history as a remarkably wise and tolerant monarch. The famous inscription he caused to be set up on the celebrated Cylinder of Cyrus, which forms as it were the last surviving page of the

long contemporary Babylonian records, presents a striking contrast to the self-laudatory and bloodthirsty records of his Assyrian and Babylonian predecessors. We read :

> "When I entered in peace into Babylon, I founded in the king's palace a seat of dominion with pleasure and joy. My vast army marched in the streets of Babylon peacefully. I had care for the inhabitants of Babylon. I comforted their sighing, I did away with their distress....The gods whose sanctuaries from of old had lain in ruins I brought back again to their dwelling-places and caused them to reside there for ever. All of the citizens of these lands I assembled and restored to their homes." [7]

No wonder the Jewish exiles hailed their deliverer with lyrical enthusiasm. Their prophets bestowed on him the highest titles in their religious vocabulary. The great anonymous prophet of the period, commonly called Second Isaiah, described him as the Anointed of the Lord, the Shepherd of Israel or the Servant of Yahweh. The Jews, in common with other captive races, were allowed to return to their homeland and to rebuild their ancient shrine. But Ezra's glowing narratives of a triumphal general return of the exiles from Babylon is not borne out by any yet discovered non-Biblical account and is not corroborated by the picture provided by the contemporary prophets, Haggai and Zechariah. They found it necessary to stir up the lukewarm interest of the few returned exiles and the survivors in Judea itself to encourage them to rebuild the Temple. [8] Work of rebuilding seems to have been undertaken in 520 B.C., the second year of the reign of Emperor Darius, and to have been completed by

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7 *Bible and Spade*. p. 181.

8 Haggai 1. 1-6.

516 B.C. The work was sought to be hindered by that mixed breed of people who occupied the larger part of Palestine at this time, the Samaritans. They were descendants of the Jews who were left behind at the time of the Assyrian captivity, and who, although they intermarried with the new colonists in the land, had always maintained some form of Yahweh worship. Hatred of the Samaritan was a pronounced strain in Jewish life from this time, surviving even to the days of Jesus of Nazareth. They asked permission to join in the work of rebuilding the Temple, but were resolutely refused. Thereupon they incited the Persian satrap of Palestine and Syria to stop the work. But, as an ancient Aramaic document preserved in Ezra 5 & 6 tells, direct permission was obtained from the Emperor Darius and the work was completed. The hopes of the returned Jews seemed at this time to have centred in Zerubbabel, scion of the ancient Davidic line, who had found sufficient favour with the Persian Emperor to have been appointed governor of Judea. Zechariah and other prophets who belong to this period went into ecstasies over this revival of the nation and saw in this Branch out of the root of Jesse the hope of the ultimate establishment of God's sovereignty over the whole world.[9] But these hopes were bound to disappointment. Zerubbabel was soon set aside to make way for a Persian satrap. Messianic hopes centring in an earthly sovereign were not revived till the later Maccabean period. But this disappointment, coming on top of the experiences of national desolation and captivity, gave birth in the mind of the greatest of

[9] I. R. 33.

the seers in pre-Christian Jewish history to a larger, a more spiritual, conception of the destiny of the nation and of the meaning of its chequered career.

This was the unknown prophet, whose writings are included in the present book of Isaiah, probably because he bore the same name as the earlier statesman-prophet, Isaiah the son of Amoz (8th Cent. B.C.), and who is therefore known to modern students of the Bible as Second Isaiah. The conditions reflected in his sermons (Isaiah 40-55 — chapters 56-66 are probably the work of a still later prophet, Third Isaiah) are those of Palestine between 500 and 450 B.C., after the building of the Temple under Zerubbabel and before the restoration of the walls of Jerusalem under Nehemiah. His written addresses are all cast in the form of Hebrew lyric poetry, in the manner of the Psalms, the argument running through them being developed in cycles of three or four groups. The main theme of these poems is the destiny of the chosen nation. No one had seen deeper than he into the meaning of the nation's experiences of earthly disaster and humiliation and no one had a loftier conception of the nation's God. To this unknown prophet Yahweh was not merely Israel's God, but the One God of the whole universe, the Everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He refers again and again to the folly of those who would fashion and worship the Eternal in the likeness of any man-made image. Yet is his God one who makes himself felt in the trusting human heart, giving power to the faint, and increasing strength to him that hath no strength. "Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fail; but they that wait upon the Lord shall renew

their strength."[10] His thoughts are higher than the thoughts of men and his ways different, just as the heavens are higher than the earth.[11] Israel's hopes of earthly glory and sovereignty are not true to the eternal purposes. Far loftier are Yahweh's purposes for his chosen nation. Israel is to be a light to lighten the nations. But this light is to shine through suffering and humiliation, through their bearing the sins of all mankind. These thoughts find their classic expression in the great Servant-Poems of this master-prophet,[12] in which Israel is pictured as God's Suffering Servant, smitten by God and afflicted, but by their stripes saving a world that has gone astray from the Source of all Being. The vicarious sufferings of individual servants of Yahweh like Jeremiah, no doubt, enabled this prophet to rise to this superb understanding of the redemptive processes at work in the universe. Christian piety has rightly seen a fulfilment of this vision of the Ideal Servant of God, bringing healing to the nations, in the person and work of Jesus Christ. But it is a picture that is true of all servants of God and humanity, who in various climes and ages have taken upon themselves the sins and sorrows of their fellowmen and mediated God's pardon and peace to them. In its original conception the prophet certainly had in mind the role of Israel as the prophet-nation, whose lot in a world of sin, its own and others', had been one of suffering and seeming

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[10] Isaiah 40. 29-31.

[11] Isaiah 55. 8 & 9.

[12] Isaiah 42. 1-4; 49. 1-6; 50. 4-9; and 52. 13 to 53. 12. See also I. R. 30.

disaster. Yet disciplined and perfected through suffering, God's Servant-Nation is to be wholly vindicated and the glory of the Lord is to shine upon her, so that "nation shall come to thy light and kings to the brightness of thy rising."[13]

But this glowing vision of the Divine Ends and Means for man's redemption was too lofty and spiritual for the nation to understand and fulfil. Though partially fulfilled in Jesus and the movement he initiated, and also finding a measure of fulfilment in Mahatma Gandhi's heroic efforts to realize justice on earth through non-violence in modern India, the vision yet tarries of an order of things when men shall "beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning-hooks, and nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more,"[14] and "the earth shall be full of the knowledge of God as the waters cover the sea."[15]

The Jewish exiles who returned were faced with the more practical task of fortifying themselves against adversaries on all sides. Their plight reached the ears of a very devout Jew, Nehemiah, probably a eunuch, who had found great favour in the personal service of Artaxerxes I, the Persian Emperor. The story of his obtaining permission and authority to return to his native land and to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem is very vividly told in the book that bears his name.[16] References in the Elephantine Letters and in the *Antiquities* of Josephus help in dating this

[13] Isaiah 60. 1-4.
[14] Isaiah 2. 4.
[15] Isaiah 11. 9.
[16] Nehemiah 1. 11 to 2:8.

historic move precisely in the spring of 445 B.C. The joy of the Lord was the strength of Nehemiah in undertaking and completing this arduous task in the face of stiff opposition from the Samaritans and the Persian governors of the neighbouring districts. But Nehemiah was a skilful organizer as well as a devout Yahweh-worshipper and he quickly carried through the project of restoring the defences of the ancient city.

Nehemiah had an even stiffer task to perform in purging the nation of corrupt practices that had crept in. One of the most dangerous of these was that of inter-marriage with non-Israelites. Even the priests were guilty of this. By precept and even more by his example of self-forgetful devotion he also sought to eradicate from the nation the evils of usury and oppression of the poor by the rich. In this he was enforcing, with his authority as the governor of the district, the ideals of social justice which had been the great theme of all the Jewish prophets and which was voiced afresh by a contemporary prophet in words that probe into the heart of all religion.[17]

Nehemiah's work of social and religious reform was consolidated by a more priestly type of reformer, Ezra, the Scribe. The account of his work, in the book called after him, is highly coloured by the point of view of the later priestly Chronicler, but probably goes back to the memoirs of this "scribe, skilled in the Law of Moses", who laboured among the Palestinian community shortly after the time of Nehemiah. His name is particularly associated with

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17 I. R. 34.

the enforcement of the Holiness Code. The central aim of these priestly laws was to make Israel á holy people, consecrated to the service of their God, and guarded against contamination by the social and religious evils prevalent among the communities around them. Great emphasis was laid on abstinence from foreign marriages and the observance of the Sabbath. The Temple dues were regulated and added to and the priesthood was exalted and enlarged. The effect of the enforcement of these laws was to bind the people together in a strong bond of unity that has been able to withstand the onslaught of later ages and alien civilizations.

Thus restored and consolidated, the small Jewish community in Palestine enjoyed a period of comparative peace and prosperity, as long as the Persian Empire lasted. The joy they found in the rich services of the restored Temple and in their devotion to Yahweh is reflected in the Book of Psalms, which was most probably compiled during this period. This collection of devotional lyrics, one of the richest and most inspiring in all the religious literature of the world, ranges over a long period of the nation's history and reflects its varied experiences. Many of them were written by priests and formed part of the ritual music of the Temple services. Some echo the teachings of the great prophets of social righteousness, demanding not ceremonial worship but integrity of heart and conduct.[18] But the best among them voice the aspirations of the individual soul in its thirst for God and give expression to the

18 I. R. 35.

assurances of pardon and peace experienced by the humble and contrite spirit.[19]

The Persian overlords of Palestine were soon to go down before the next world-power, Greece. The earliest mention of the Greeks in the Old Testament[20] is found in the brief prophecy of Joel, who prophesied towards the end of the Persian period. The immediate occasion for his preaching was the invasion of Judea by a swarm of locusts that threatened to eat up all the produce of the land. Prophet though he was, he called upon the priests to sanctify the people and to cry aloud to the Lord for deliverance. But the main burden of his prophecy was the announcement of the coming of the Day of the Lord, when he will pour out his spirit upon flesh, a prophecy which the Apostle Peter declared to have found fulfilment in the coming of the Holy Spirit upon the early Christian believers on the day of Pentecost.[21]

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19 I. R. 36; See also Psalms 16, 27, 51.
20 Joel 3. 6.
21 Joel 2. 28-32. cf. Acts 2. 17-21.

32. *The Vision of Ezekiel* (Ezekiel 1. 4-28).

And I looked, and, behold, a stormy wind came out of the north, a great cloud, with a fire infolding itself, and a brightness round about it, and out of the midst thereof as the colour of amber, out of the midst of the fire. And out of the midst thereof came the likeness of four living creatures. And this was their appearance: they had the likeness of a man. And every one had four faces, and every one of them had four wings. And their feet were straight feet; and the sole of their feet was like the sole of a calf's foot! and they sparkled like the colour of burnished brass. And they had the hands of a man under their wings on their four sides: and they four had their wings and their faces thus:..........This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord. And when I saw it, I fell upon my face.

33. *These Things Shall Be* (Micah 4. 1-4).

But in the latter days it shall come to pass, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains and it shall be exalted above the hills; and peoples shall flow unto it. And many nations shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, and to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. And he shall judge between many peoples, and shall reprove strong nations afar off; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. But they shall sit everyman under his vine and under his fig tree; and none shall make them afraid; for the mouth of the Lord of hosts hath spoken it.

34. *Fasting Acceptable to God* (Isaiah 58. 6-11).

Is not this the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bonds of wickedness, to undo the bands of the yoke, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke? Is it not to

deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house? when thou seest the naked, that thou cover him; and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh? Then shall thy light break forth as the morning, and thy healing shall spring forth speedily: and thy righteousness shall go before thee; and the glory of the Lord shall be thy rearward. Then shalt thou call, and the Lord shall answer; thou shalt cry, and he shall say, Here I am. If thou take away from the midst of thee the yoke, the putting forth of the finger, and speaking wickedly; and if thou draw out thy soul to the hungry and satisfy the afflicted soul; then shall thy light rise in darkness, and thine obscurity as the noonday: and the Lord shall guide thee continually, and satisfy thy soul in dry places, and make strong thy bones; and thou shalt be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters fail not.

35. *The Eternal's Demand of a Blameless Life* (Psalm 15).

In thy pavilion, O Eternal, who may be a guest,
who may dwell on thy sacred hill?
He whose life is blameless, who does right,
he whose words are from the heart,
No scandal on his tongue to hurt his fellow,
no insult heaped upon his neighbour;
He who has contempt for rogues,
and honours those who reverence the Eternal;
He who keeps to his oath, though he may lose by it,
he who will take no interest on a loan;
He who will not be bribed against the innocent....
he, living so, shall never be rejected.

36. *Thirst for the Living God* (Psalm 42).

The deer is panting for a stream,
and I am panting, O God, for thee.
I am athirst for God, the living God:
when shall I reach God's presence?
Day and night I have lived on my tears,
taunted all day with, "Where is your God?"
My soul is melting with secret sorrow,
for well I remember it all....

How I led the throng once to the house of God,
    chanting, praising, pacing in full festival.
        Why art thou downcast, O my soul?
        Why so despairing?
        Wait, wait for God; I shall again
            be praising him, my saving help, my God.
My soul is downcast; so I remember thee
    in this far land of Jordan and of Hermon,
    at mount Mizar.
Flood follows flood, as thy cataracts thunder,
    thy breakers and billows are all surging over me.
To God my strength I cry,
    "Why hast thou forgotten me?
    Why must I mourn, as foes oppress me?"
It is an agony to hear them in derision
    taunting me all day with, "Where is your God?"
        Why art thou downcast, O my soul?
        Why so despairing?
        Wait, wait for God; I shall again
            be praising him, my saving help, my God.

THE BOOK OF JOB

The Book of Job is widely recognized to be the incomparable literary masterpiece of the Bible. It partakes of the nature of a lyric, as well as a reflective poem, and it is cast in the form of a dramatic dialogue. Most of it is superb poetry, as befitting its poignant theme and the exalted characters taking part in the drama. The theme is the eternal problem of unmerited suffering in the world, and the chief characters are the Eternal Himself and a suffering righteous man, who dares to assert his righteousness before the Almighty Potentate — "though he slay me, yet will I wait for him: ....I know I am righteous"[1] Job's is an undaunted protest against the accepted theory that as a man sows so he reaps, because he has found in his own experience of undeserved suffering, and through observation, that there is one event to the evil and to the good. "It is all one; he destroys the perfect and the wicked. If it be not he, who then?"[2] The traditional argument that suffering is always the result of wrong-doing is put into the mouth of Job's comforters, who are really "physicians of no value", who talk deceitfully for God and mouth theories which they have neither experienced nor thought through. Job has felt more intensely than any of them, than any of his time and generation,[3] the fact of evil in the

[1] Job 13. 15 & 18.

[2] Job 9. 24.

[3] The date of the book has never been discovered nor is even its approximate time generally agreed on. Perhaps more critics place it between 500 and 400 B.C. than at any other date.

world. No less than any of his contemporaries, he grants the omnipotence of God; but the poignant question to Job is: Is the Almighty just? Job sees the earth given into the hand of the wicked; and therefore he appeals to the earth:

> Cover not thou my blood,
> And let my cry have no resting place.

There is more genuine faith in this man's honest doubt than in all the credulity of the defenders of the faith handed down from the fathers. And that seems to be the supreme answer of the author of the Book of Job. For in the end Job's questing, questioning soul is satisfied, but not so much by argument as by a convincing realization of the presence of God in His creation. The majestic poetry put into the mouth of the Eternal when he finally answers Job out of the whirlwind[4] — poetry which has few equals in the whole realm of literature — overwhelms Job by an *immediate* realization of the power and might of the Creator. It is an intensely felt sense of the numinous, of the *mysterium tremendum fascinans*, and no cowed surrender of his reason, that makes Job in the end abhor himself and repent in dust and ashes. Faith, which was previously impossible to him, becomes inescapable:

> I had heard of thee by the hearing of the ear,
> But now mine eye seeth thee.[5]

This superb dialogue between man and God, between a tortured man of faith and his Maker, is encased in an ancient legend that gives one of

[4] I. R. 38.
[5] Job 42: 5 & 6.

the traditional answers to the problem raised in the book. The setting of this legend is a scene in Heaven, where the sons of God assemble before the Lord, and Satan — not here the Arch-Enemy of man, but the instrument of God's sifting providence — is among them, returned from "going to and fro in the earth and from walking up and down in it". This legend provides the prologue and the epilogue of the majestic poem and gives its own traditional answer to the problem. That answer is that the sufferings of this man of God, who is one among the three supreme men of God in Hebrew tradition, Noah, Daniel and Job,[6] are but the fires of God that test a man's faith that it might shine forth more precious than gold. Job submits himself to his trials with perfect resignation, saying, when he suffers the loss of all his possessions, including his children: "The Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord;" and when his own person is afflicted almost beyond endurance and his wife bids him curse God and die: "What? shall we receive good at the hand of God and shall we not receive evil?" In all this Job did not sin, says the prologue, and in the epilogue he is completely vindicated by his Maker and restored to double of all that he had in earthly possessions, with all his sons and daughters too! But imbedded in this ancient legend is the more significant, inner drama of an earnest soul grappling with the mystery of evil in the world and finding satisfaction in an experience of the Living God. It is a book that has to be read both as superb literature and as a religious classic.

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[6] Ezekiel 14. 14.

37. *Job's Lament Over His Sufferings* (Job 3).

Let the day perish wherein I was born,
And the night which said, There is a man child conceived.
Let that day be darkness;
Let not God regard it from above,
Neither let the light shine upon it.
Why died I not from the womb?
Why did I not give up the ghost when I came out of the belly?
For now should I have lain down and been quiet;
I should have slept; then had I been at rest:
With kings and counsellors of the earth,
Which built up waste places for themselves;
Or with princes that had gold,
Who filled their houses with silver:
There the wicked cease from troubling;
And there the weary be at rest.
There the prisoners are at ease together;
They hear not the voice of the taskmaster.
The small and great are there;
And the servant is free from his master.
Wherefore is light given to him that is in misery,
And life unto the bitter in soul;
Which long for death, but it cometh not;
And dig for it more than for hid treasures;
Which rejoice exceedingly,
And are glad, when they can find the grave?
Why is light given to a man whose way is hid,
And whom God hath hedged in?
For my sighing cometh before I eat,
And my roarings are poured out like water.
For the thing which I fear cometh upon me,
And that which I am afraid of cometh unto me.
I am not at ease, neither am I quiet, neither have I rest;
But trouble cometh.

38. *The Eternal Speaks: The Glories of Heaven and Earth* (Job 38).

**Then the Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind and said,
Who is this that darkeneth counsel
By words without knowledge?
Gird up now thy loins like a man;
For I will demand of thee, and declare thou unto me.
Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth?
Declare if thou hast understanding.
Who determined the measures thereof, if thou knowest?
Or who stretched the line upon it?
Whereupon were the foundations thereof fastened?
Or who laid the corner stone thereof;
When the morning stars sang together,
And all the sons of God shouted for joy?
Or who shut up the sea with doors,
When it brake forth, as if it had issued out of the womb;
When I made the cloud the garment thereof,
And thick darkness a swaddlingband for it,
And prescribed for it my decree,
And set bars and doors,
And said, Hitherto shalt thou come, but no further;
And here shall thy proud waves be stayed?
Canst thou bind the cluster of the Pleiades,
Or loose the bands of Orion?
Canst thou lead forth the Mazzaroth in their season?....
Or canst thou guide the Bear with her train?
Who hath put wisdom in the inward parts?
Or who hath given understanding to the mind?
Who can number the clouds by wisdom?
Or who can pour out the bottles of heaven,
When the dust runneth into a mass,
And the clods cleave fast together?
Wilt thou hunt the prey for the lioness?
Or satisfy the appetite of the young lions,
When they couch in their dens,
And abide in the covert to lie in wait?
Who provideth for the raven his food,
When his young ones cry unto God,
And wander for lack of meat?**

CHAPTER X

BETWEEN THE TESTAMENTS

Ezra and Nehemiah are the last historical books of the Old Testament. The period between them (5th century B.C.) and the writings of the New Testament is, in the imagination of most readers of the Bible, little more than a blank — "an interval of shadows between the sunlit regions of the Old and the New Testaments. Yet it was in truth a period pregnant with great things, a period of supreme importance in the development of that Jewish religion which with all its good and evil features confronted him who at last came to the Temple of Yahweh like a refiner's fire, discerning the gold from the dross."[1] The history of the period is covered by certain writings of doubtful and varying historical value, grouped together under the title of the Apocrypha.[2] Perhaps the general conscience of Judaism was right in excluding these books from its sacred canon, for the triumphs and tribulations recorded in them were marred by violent and flagrant departures from the true spirit of Jewish

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[1] E. Bevan: *Jerusalem Under the High-Priests* (p. 2), an invaluable book for students of the period.

[2] The Apocrypha was an integral part of the Greek O. T. (the Septuagaint) and therefore formed part of the Hebrew scriptures known to Jesus and the N. T. writers. It was excluded from the Hebrew canon by the Council of Jamnia (91 A. D.). Chief among the books of the Apocrypha are: 1 & 2 Maccabees, 1 & 2 Esdras and the Ecclesiasticus.

history in which great things had been achieved "not by might nor by power but by My spirit."[3] The period was also unilluminated by any authentic word of the Lord through any accredited prophet. But the triumphs and tribulations both entered deep into the experiences of the people and paved the way for that culminating revelation that forms the watershed between the Old and the New.

The Book of Daniel, a strange mixture of prophecy and apocalypse, really dates from this period but has found its way into the Old Testament. In this book the heathen kingdoms that in succession held sway over the chosen people are pictured as beasts coming up out of the sea. The last of these, which is described as "terrible and powerful and strong exceedingly; and it had great iron teeth: it devoured and brake in pieces, and stamped the residue with his feet,"[4] represents Alexander, the Macedonian conqueror, who took the countries of the Eastern Mediterranean world in his stride across the world. The description goes on to tell of the horns that came out of the head of this beast, of one especially that sprang up and gored and mangled the helpless people of Yahweh. In the peculiar symbolism of the apocalypses this horn depicts Antiochus Epiphanes, one of the Seleucid kings of Syria, who had finally wrested the supremacy of Palestine from the Ptolemies of Egypt. Josephus, the Jewish historian of the first century A. D., whose book *The Jewish War* is one of the main sources of knowledge regarding this period, aptly

[3] Zechariah 4. 6.

[4] Dan. 7. 7.

compares the lot of the Jewish people under the Greeks after the death of Alexander to a ship in a storm smitten by the waves on either side. The Ptolemies of Egypt first held sway over Palestine after the break-up of Alexander's empire, but after a period of incessant war the land passed under the control of the Seleucids about 200 B.C. Under the Seleucid sway Judaism faced in some ways the greatest crisis in its career. For now for the first time there met in mortal conflict those two rival forces in the Western world, Hebraism and Hellenism. The new Greek overlords of Palestine, unlike its earlier conquerors, attempted deliberately to stamp out the religion of the conquered and to impose what they believed to be their superior culture. Greek cities, with their distinctive features, sprang up all over the Eastern Mediterranean countries, and Greek ways of living had an appeal to many even in Judea. Antiochus, in whom there was a pronounced mania for Hellenization, had been provoked by a rebellion of the Jews while he was away compaigning in Egypt and he turned upon the people in a determined effort to crush what seemed to him their eccentric faith. It was in 169 B.C. that he entered the Temple in Jerusalem, pulled down the sacred altar, erected another to Zeus in its place and offered swine's flesh upon it. This is the "abomination of desolation standing where it ought not", spoken of by Daniel, which filled with dismay the faithful Jews who had ever looked up to Yahweh as able to protect them in all adversities. The Book of Daniel was written at this time to strengthen the faith of the people by citing examples of loyalty to Yahweh in similar fiery trials and of His great deliverances in

the past, exaggerated and idealized though most of these stories are. A Hellenizing party which had already appeared among the Jews temporized with the hated conqueror, but many suffered as martyrs and a larger number fled to the surrounding country.

Here the banner of revolt was raised by a faithful old priest, Mattathias, and his brave sons. The exiles in the wilderness were followed by officers of the Seleucid government and were offered the choice of death or the worship of the Greek god, Zeus. Mattathias slew first a renegade Jew who was about to sacrifice to the heathen god and then the Greek officer. This was the beginning of a war for religious liberty and it finally ended in a successful fight for political independence as well. In the first phase of this struggle the rebellious party had the support of a new sect that appears in Israel at this time, the Hasidim. They were the pious among the people, faithful to their God and standing primarily for freedom of worship. Later when religious liberty was won and the sons of Mattathias, the Hasmoneans as they are known in Greek history, seized political power as well, they separated from them and came to be known as the Pharisees, or the separatists, who figure so largely in the Gospel narratives. Mattathias soon died in the conflict and the leadership passed to his son Judas, who was surnamed the Maccabee or the Hammer of the Gentiles. Judas harassed the Seleucid kings first as a guerilla chieftain, but soon won many pitched battles against them. Four years after the desecration of the Temple by Antiochus, Judas was able to re-enter the Temple and dedicate it anew, and that event is still celebrated by the Jews in the Feast of Lights. When Judas fell his place

was taken by his brother Jonathan. The Seleucid kingdom was soon torn by wars between rival claimants to its throne, and the Jewish rebel leaders won successes in the military as well as the diplomatic field by supporting one or the other of the rivals. Jonathan was the first of the Hasmoneans to be recognized as the High-Priest as well as the political head of the Jewish State. In the succeeding dissensions between rival Seleucid kings Simon, the last of the Maccabean brothers, was able to remove the last vestige of Greek supremacy in Jerusalem by capturing the citadel or *akra* in the heart of the city that had all along been garrisoned by Greek troops. His grandson, Aristobolus, completed the process in 104 B.C. by assuming the title of King. But it was a triumph over which the more religious of the people did not rejoice. The rupture between them and the monarchical party had by this time become complete. During the reign of his successor, Alexander Jannaeaus, we have the strange spectacle of the Jews who supported the Pharisaic party fighting against their own king, and stranger still of 800 of the Pharisees being publicly crucified by the orders of their own king.

The squabble for succession between the sons of Jannaeus caused the rising power of Rome to intervene in Palestine. It is significant that along with the rival claimants there appeared before Pompey at Damascus in 63 B.C. a deputation from the Jewish people requesting the Roman general to relieve them of kings and restore to them the peaceful practice of their religion. A struggle for independence, started and sustained under great stress and with great expectations, thus ended ingloriously in complete

disillusionment and the total estrangement of the religious enthusiasts from the purely politically minded.

There appears on the scene now the sinister figure of Antipater, the Idumean, a member of the Edomite race, whom one of the Hasmonean kings had forcibly converted to Judaism, and the founder of the dynasty of the Herods who ruled over parts of Palestine in the New Testament times. Appearing first as a supporter of one of the rival Hasmonean princes, he won the favour of the Romans, and by adroitly supporting the rising factions in the swiftly changing scenes of Roman politics at the time, he secured for himself and his sons the controlling position in Palestine. On Antipater's death his son Herod secured appointment as the Roman tetrarch of Palestine, while his father's protege, the Hasmonean Hyrcanus, continued to be the high priest. With the help of the Romans, Herod was finally nominated King of Judea in 37 B.C., the last Hasmonean claimant of the Jewish throne being beheaded by the Romans. Herod, though more pagan than Jew in his convictions, proved an upholder of the Jewish cause by exerting his powerful influence at Rome to safeguard the interests of the Jews scattered in all parts of the empire and also by rebuilding the Temple. This was only one of his many building enterprises, chief among which was the city of Caesarea named in honour of his master Augustus Caesar. But the Jews were proud of the Temple which he started to build in 20 B.C. and which was still in building 46 years later when Jesus taught in Jerusalem and predicted its sure destruction.[5] Herod died in 4 B.C. after the

[5] John 2. 20.

birth in Bethlehem of him who was born to be king of Israel, and after a characteristically brutal, but futile, effort to blot him out in infancy by means of a terrible massacre of all the children born in Bethlehem then under the age of two.[6] Those who held rule in Palestine in the days of Jesus of Nazareth were the sons of this Idumean adventurer, Herod Antipas in Galilee and Perea and Philip in the regions of Trachonitis and Iturea in the north, both with the title of *tetrarch*, while Judea was under the direct rule of Rome, with a *procurator* in charge with his seat in Caesarea.

Hopes regarding the restoration of earthly sovereignty having thus borne bitter fruit, the fancies of the faithful found expression along other lines. It is from this period, the latter days of the Hasmonean kings or the reign of Herod, that there has survived a set of strange books, known as Apocalypses, purporting to reveal the shape of things to come in the form of visions granted to the ancient worthies of Israel. Not unknown in earlier days, these visions of the end became very prevalent and popular at this time of national disillusionment and humiliation. *The Similitudes of Enoch*, *The Assumption of Moses*, *The Vision of Isaiah*, and other writings ascribed to the great leaders of the nation's past depict in peculiar symbolism God's final vindication of Himself and of His chosen people. The Apocalypses were really born of despair regarding human endeavour and of glowing faith in a transcendent and all-powerful God. So they depict God's final purposes as being achieved through supernatural means and agents. Chief

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[6] Matt. 2. 13-18.

among these, and repeatedly appearing in apocalyptic literature, is the figure of the *Son of Man*, the *Anointed One*, (Messiah), appointed before the beginning of creation to his task of judging the earth and establishing the reign of righteousness on earth. It is significant that this title, filled with such content and association in the literature of the period, was the one that Jesus constantly used for himself. Apocalyptic hopes, as expressed in books like the *Similitudes of Enoch*, certainly coloured the expectations and ideas that found expression in the books of the New Testament.

Another type of literature that also flourished during this period was the so-called "*Wisdom Literature*" of the Jews. This also goes back to early times, for from the beginning of the nation's history we read of wise men, and women too, standing behind their leaders and giving them timely advice. King Solomon, who had gained a reputation for wisdom, was believed to have uttered three thousand proverbs,[7] and when a collection of these pithy, epigrammatic sayings was made later, probably about the middle of the Greek period (200 B.C.) they were naturally attributed to Solomon. But they represent the collected wisdom of the race and the majority of them date from a time when the nation had been destroyed and the fate of the individual loomed larger in the thoughts of the people. That is why the word *Israel* is found nowhere in the book of Proverbs. This gives a universal and timeless import to these sayings, though the wisdom enshrined in them is of a different quality from "the

[7] 1 Kings 4. 32.

divine imprudences" associated with the teachings of the great prophets. The aims of the wise were mainly to instruct and educate the people to become sane, happy and efficient men and women in this world.[8] The personification of Wisdom as a woman is a mark of later Jewish thought. A remarkable contrast is drawn between the feast that Wisdom offers her guests and the banquet that Folly spreads before her dupes.[9] But inspite of its seeming worldliness it has to be noted that the Wisdom the wise men of Israel extolled was grounded in a deep belief in God. It is a wisdom that proceeds out of the mouth of God and has its beginning, as well as its fulfilment, in the fear of the Lord.[10] Yet Hebrew wisdom never rose to a satisfying answer to the problem that was becoming ever more poignant in the nation's experience, that of the suffering of the just and the triumph of the wicked in this life. At one stage it sufficed to believe that the latter end of the righteous was always happy, that God will never finally abandon, even in this life, those who trust in Him, though they may be sorely tried for a time, that the wicked great always stand in slippery places, that however great they may wax, in a moment they are cast down and brought to confusion.[11] This is, in the main, the answer to this problem found in the book of Ecclesiasticus or The Wisdom of Ben-Sira, an altogether noble book, though apocryphal, which perhaps had a greater right to canonical rank than the utterly pessimistic book Ecclesiastes, that has found a place in the

8 I. R. 39; Prov. 1. 2-6.

9 I. R. 40; Prov. 9.

10 Ps. 111. 10 and Prov. 9. 10.

11 Ps. 73. 18 & 19.

Old Testament Canon. Another solution, also urged by the same writer, is that a good life, even though it may end in disaster, lives for ever in the memory of the race: "Man is a vain breath in respect of his body; only the name of the pious shall not be cut off. The good things of life are only for a tale of days; but the good of the name is for days untold."[12] But the poignant experiences of the Maccabean days, of the continued suffering and death of the innocent rendered even this unsatisfying and gave rise to the glimmering hope that there is a vindication of the righteous, and a punishment of the wicked, in a life after death. This hope, glimpsed even by the author of the Book of Job, became more clearly defined in association with the expectation of the coming of the Son of Man. One of the earliest expressions of it is found in the Book of Daniel, which was intended to give consolation to those in travail during the Maccabean days. In his vision of the consummation of all things the writer holds out the hope that "Many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life and some to everlasting contempt. And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever."[13]

[12] Eccles. 41. 10-13.
[13] Dan. 12. 2 & 3.

39. *The Aims of the Wise* (Proverbs 1. 2-6).

To know wisdom and instruction;
To discern the words of understanding;
To receive instruction in wise dealing,
In righteousness and judgement and equity;
To give subtilty to the simple,
To the young man knowledge and discretion:
That the wise man may hear, and increase in learning;
And that the man of understanding may attain unto sound counsels:
To understand a proverb and a figure;
The words of the wise and their dark sayings.

40. *The Feast of Wisdom* (Proverbs 9) .

Wisdom hath builded her house,
She hath hewn out her seven pillars:
She hath killed her beasts; she hath mingled her wine;
She hath also furnished her table.
She hath sent forth her maidens, she crieth
Upon the highest places of the city,
Whoso is simple, let him turn in hither:
As for him that is void of understanding, she saith to him,
Come, eat ye of my bread,
And drink of the wine which I have mingled.
Leave off, ye simple ones and live;
And walk in the way of understanding.
The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom:
And the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.
For by me thy days shall be multiplied,
And the years of thy life shall be increased.

CHAPTER XI

JESUS OF NAZARETH — THE GOSPELS

The story of God's revelation to man, as recorded in the Bible, reaches its culmination in Jesus of Nazareth. He forms the watershed between the two Testaments or Covenants between God and man, the Old pointing to, and preparing the way for, him and the New proceeding from him. A writer of the New Testament pictures him as the full effulgence, the very image, of the God who had spoken in diverse forms and in diverse manners through the earlier teachers of Israel.[1] Jesus himself spoke of his mission as one of fulfilling and not annulling the Law and the Prophets.[2] And it is only in the light, and against the background, of this growing and progressive revelation, " line upon line and precept upon precept ", that his teaching and his person can be understood. Progress in religion is achieved through an ever-deepening and growing discrimination between the essentials and non-essentials in man's apprehension of, and response to, the Divine. It is the line of that progress in Jewish religion that has been attempted to be traced in this all too brief and inadequate account of the story of the Bible. In Jesus of Nazareth, especially in his death on the cross, this development reached a simplification and an

[1] Hebrews 1. 1 &2.
[2] Matthew 5. 17.

intensity which justifies the ecstatic utterance of a modern poet:[3]

> In the cross of Christ I glory,
> Towering o'er the wrecks of time;
> All the light of sacred story
> Gathers round its head sublime.

But that glory shone through the prism of historic time which inevitably stains the white radiance of the eternal verities. The revelation through Jesus was necessarily conditioned by, while in a measure it also transcended, the rich heritage which was his in Judaism. Jesus came of lowly Jewish parents, among whom the faith of Israel burned with a living glow. The hopes that stirred them are vividly set forth in the utterances of the chosen vehicles through whom this manifestation of the Divine was historically achieved.[4] The stories of the miraculous birth, not only of Jesus but of his forerunner John the Baptist as well, may have only the truth and the beauty of myth and not literal fact; but they faithfully reflect the expectations of the age and people to whom he came and belonged. His mother Mary's submission to the will of God, as communicated to her by her angelic visitant in the beautiful story, reveals an attitude of mind that expects and achieves great things from and for God: "Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word."[5] And so the child that was born to her, whether through direct divine generation as the stories preserved in two of the Gospels imply,

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[3] Sir John Bowring.

[4] I. R. 41. The Magnificat: Luke 1. 46-55; Luke 2. 25 and Luke 1. 68-79.

[5] Luke 1. 38.

or through normal human parentage, was in a real sense a Child of God, a Son of the Most High. And Joseph,her husband, of whom so little is told in the Gospel narratives, must have been such a father to the growing child that the word *Father* became the richest and most satisfying appellation that Jesus could give to God. The other details of this beautiful idyll, of his birth in a stable, because there was no room in the inn at Bethlehem for the Holy Family, of the angelic announcement to lowly shepherds keeping watch by their flocks at night, of the star-led Wise Men from the East who paid their homage to the child born to be king, all these have symbolic if not literal truth. There is no place even now for the Lord of Mankind when He comes and knocks at the door of the human heart and the advent of His flaming feet is perceived only by watchful souls, lowly and wise.

There is only one revealing story told of the boyhood of Jesus, and this depicts him as concerned above everything else, even at the early age of twelve, about his Father's business. The story tells how he sought enlightenment from the accredited teachers of religion in the Temple at Jerusalem and how they were filled with amazement at his discernment.[6] And the veil is drawn again over those hidden years,[7] with the significant comment of the evangelist: "And Jesus advanced in wisdom and stature and in favour with God and man." Remarkable must have been that growth, like that of the

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[6] Luke 2. 41-52.

[7] See a delightfully imaginative reconstruction of those *Hidden Years* by John Oxenham.

seed growing silently, first the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear, till it is ripe for the harvest and for the feeding of the world.[8]

Luke, who alone amongst the Gospel writers attempt to fix the chronology of the life of Jesus with reference to events in the outer world, says that Jesus was about thirty years of age when he stepped into the light of history.[9] The occasion for that was the appearance of a great teacher in Israel, a prophet at last, centuries after the genuine word of prophecy had ceased to be heard in Israel. This was John the Baptist, to whom Jesus bore witness that he was much more than a prophet, than whom none greater was born of woman.[10] Christian records make him nothing more than a voice foretelling the coming of one greater than himself. He himself was content to fade away in the glow of a greater light. But he was himself a shining light, in whose blaze the nation was willing to rejoice for a season;[11] and he kindled to a white heat the flame of Jewish expectation of God's deliverance. We are told that for a time all men reasoned in their hearts concerning John whether or not he were the Christ.[12] It shows the real greatness of John that he did not succumb to that temptation and was obedient to his call to be a messenger heralding the coming of one greater than himself. His was essentially a call to repentance to the nation to prepare itself for the redemption from on high, for the coming of the Kingdom of God. And

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8 Mark 4. 26-29.

9 Luke 3. 23.

10 Mark 11. 8-11.

11 John 5. 30.

12 Luke 3. 15.

as a sign of repentance he administered baptism in the waters of the river Jordan, by the side of which he preached.

The relation of Jesus to John the Baptist and the debt he owed to him are seen from Jesus submitting to the rite of baptism at this *guru's* hand. Later when his own authority was challenged by the leaders of the Jews, Jesus asked them about their estimate of John, the implication being that if John's authority was from God, which they dared not deny, then his own had divine attestation.[13] Certain it is that baptism at the hands of John was a crucial experience in the life of Jesus. Our records, inconsonant in details as they often are, due to colouring by later beliefs concerning the Master, agree in depicting this as the moment when Jesus, like all the great prophets of Israel, received his own call to be the Servant of God. And it is significant that the words he heard commissioning him to his task echoed the phrases of the Old Testament prophecy: "Thou art my beloved Son, in thee I am well pleased."[14]

The element of outer constraint laid upon Jesus at this time of crisis, by the influx into him of the Spirit of God, is indicated in the brief but faithful narrative we have of it in the earliest of the Gospels, St. Mark. We read that "straightway the spirit *drove* him into the wilderness."[15] And there, in lonely prayer and fasting, Jesus grappled with the new sense of power and of commission that had come to him. He was, we are told, in the wilderness for forty days

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[13] Mark 11. 27-33.

[14] Mark 1. 11. cf. Psalms 2. 7 and Isaiah 42. 1.

[15] Mark 1. 12.

and was there tempted by Satan. These temptations, the account of which in picturesque language must have come from Jesus himself, all related to the methods by which he was to fulfil the divine commission laid on him at the baptism. Was he to use his powers for the satisfaction primarily of his own and his people's physical needs, turning stones into bread, bringing in a material Utopia? He rejected this by reminding himself that man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God. Or was he to be a wonder-worker compelling belief in himself by a stupendous miracle, a sign from heaven, jumping from the pinnacle of the Temple and landing unharmed amidst a wondering populace? This was a temptation to which Jesus was continually subject during all the days of his ministry, the people as well as the leaders asking for a sign that they might believe. But Jesus would not tempt God in this manner nor compel men's allegiance. Or, subtlest of all, was he to use a tainted means for the realization of a good end, to use the way of the world, "bowing down to Satan", to bring in the kingdom of God? He was shown, we are told, all the kingdoms of the world, and heard the devil say, "All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me." This, too, Jesus categorically rejected, deciding to serve God alone and to tread the path of obedience to the will of God wherever that might lead him.[16]

Having thus triumphed over the temptations to choose anything lower than the will of God for the

[16] I. R. 42: Matt 4. 1-11.

fulfilment of his mission, Jesus returned in the power of the spirit to his native province of Galilee. But even yet he did not set out on his public ministry. But when his *guru*, John the Baptist, was put out of action in a conflict with authority in Palestine, he must have felt it his call to carry on, and forward, the message that had come through John. His initial message was almost the same as that of John : " The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand : repent ye and believe in the gospel." [17] But the content of Jesus' message was fuller and deeper than that of John. John for all his greatness had only foreseen the kingdom ; to Jesus the kingdom was a present reality and those who accepted his teaching had already appropriated it and its powers.

It was those powers manifest in him that most impressed those who came across him. " John did no sign," the Jews are reported to have remarked, " but whatsoever John spake of this man are true." Jesus himself, in his reply to John's question from prison, whether he was the Coming One, referred John's messengers to the mighty works he was doing at the time : " the blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them " [19] Even more impressive to his contemporaries than the works here enumerated was his power over evil spirits. The Gospels are full of such miracles of healing wrought by Jesus. There is, for instance, the story told of an

[17] Mark 1. 14.
[18] John 10. 41.
[19] Matthew 11. 4-5.

epileptic boy being cured by Jesus casting the devil out of him.[20] There are innumerable other stories of raging maniacs calmed by the presence and the words of Jesus. Jesus himself seems to have worked on the hypothesis, unquestioningly accepted by his contemporaries, that these were cases of devil-possession. The evil spirits are in many cases reported to have recognized in him the power of God and the testimony of these demoniacs contributed largely to the growth of the belief in the divinity of Jesus.[21] That evidence is naturally discounted in these days when increased knowledge of the constitution and the aberrations of the human mind provide us with naturalistic explanations of similar phenomena. Jesus undoubtedly possessed power over demented minds, and in an age when miracles were believed in he displayed great powers of healing.

But it is significant to note that he never made a display of these powers. They were in almost all cases wrung out of him because of his compassion for suffering humanity, and he invariably imposed silence on those he healed, bidding them not to proclaim them but to give glory to God. These mighty works proceeded out of his faith in his loving Heavenly Father, and were manifested wherever an answering faith was found in those who approached him. "Thy faith hath healed thee, go in peace and be free from thy complaint",[22] was a typical exhortation to one whom he healed. And it is significant that in spite of the tendency to extol and

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20 Mark 9. 17-29.
21 Mark 1. 21-28.
22 Mark 5. 34.

exaggerate these powers the Gospel-writers are faithful enough to tell us that where this answering faith was lacking he could do no miracle.[23]

The fact is, he himself was the supreme miracle, in the faith that moved him and that he inspired, in the love that made him give himself in service to the lowliest and the lost, in the sympathy and understanding that enabled him to mediate God's forgiveness to the publicans and the sinners, in the completeness of his humanity that made him truly a Son of Man and a Son of God. Rightly has he been described as one who went about doing good, healing all manner of diseases and all manner of sickness, for God was with him.[24] But it is unhistorical to picture him in terms of our modern understanding of God and the universe. He belonged to the age in which he lived; and it was into the mould of first-century conceptions that his being and his message were cast. The true understanding of him, as a great student of the historical problems connected with the origins of Christianity[25] has reminded us, is to be taken possession of by his spirit; and then he will come to us as he came to his first disciples of old by the Sea of Galilee, bidding us follow him and setting us to the tasks he has for us to fulfil in our own generation.

So Jesus came to the shores of the Sea of Galilee, which was the scene and the setting of most of his recorded teaching, with the message, the gospel of the Kingdom of God. It was there that he found his early

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[23] Mark 6. 5 & 6.
[24] Acts 10. 38.
[25] A. Schweitzer: *The Quest of the Historical Jesus.*

disciples, most of whom were from the ranks of the poor, fishermen by profession. The first three Gospels,[26] Synoptics as they are called from their sharing a common point of view regarding the life and work of Jesus, as against the Fourth Gospel, agree in presenting the message of the Kingdom as the central theme of Jesus' preaching and the parabolic method as his chosen practice. In parable after parable he expounded the nature and the working of that kingdom and the character of its King. His parables are all drawn from nature and the life of the common man, from the farm, the home and the market-place. The earlier parables give the unmistakable impression that Jesus believed that the seed of the kingdom he was sowing would sprout and grow silently and steadily into a mighty tree that will shelter under its spreading branches everything on earth. That is the message of the Parable of the Mustard Seed or of the Banyan Tree, to give it an Indian setting.[27] The same hope is expressed in the similitude of the little leaven leavening a whole lump of dough. Jesus was however realist enough, and had pondered over the fate of his predecessors, the

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[26] Matthew, Mark and Luke. There is a consensus of scholarly opinion that Mark was the earliest of these, written about 65 A. D. and contains the reminiscences of Peter recorded by his disciple, John Mark. Mark formed the basis of the other two Gospels. But they had another common source, known to scholars as *Q*, for much of the teachings of Jesus recorded in common by them; and also each a separate special source. Materials from earlier sources were used without acknowledgement and were woven together according to the writer's plan and purpose, as was the literary practice in those days.

[27] Matt. 13. 31-33.

Old Testament prophets, to have foreseen even in those days that there would be opposition and frustration, the seed wasted on the wayside and lost among thorns. He was also conscious of the power of evil in the world, of the enemy that sows tares among the good seed, of the conflict between good and evil. But the note at this early period was undoubtedly one of optimism and the emphasis is on the joy of participation in the kingdom, for the sake of which one would gladly surrender everything else. The Kingdom of God is like a pearl of great price which when a merchant has found it he goes and sells all he has in order to buy it.[28]

These glad tidings of the coming of the Kingdom proceeded from his immediate knowledge of God. God is the loving Father of mankind, caring for the lowliest of His creatures. The argument was clearly taken from human fatherhood to the Divine. If you being evil know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more does God![29] And He is infinitely merciful, forgiving human sin, not because it did not matter, but because His is a love that cannot let the sinner go, but goes out to seek and to save the lowliest and the lost. These precious lessons of the limitless love of God and of the infinite value of the least of His creatures in His sight form the very heart of the gospel and are taught in the inimitable parables of the Lost Sheep, the Lost Coin and the Lost Son.[30]

Another set of teachings, given on various occasions in the form of pithy sayings, but collected

[28] Matthew 13. 44-46.
[29] Luke 11. 12.
[30] I. R. 44; Luke 15. 11-32.

together in two of the Gospels and commonly known as the Sermon of the Mount, describe the characteristics of the members of the kingdom. Though highly esteemed by all professing Christians this pathway to happiness and this plan of life for man as God intends him to live it, has too often been treated in Christian history as a splendid museum-piece, mere religious romancing, inapplicable to conditions of life on this solid earth. "It is the Sermon on the Mount which is the central problem," says a candid modern student of Christianity. "If we could believe that the Sermon on the Mount was true, if it could work as a practical proposition in our present lives, then all the rest of the Gospel statements would certainly look far less improbable." [31] And wherever it has been taken seriously it has produced lives that have compelled the attention of the world, lives that have acted as salt to preserve human civilization from total corruption. Testimony to its essential applicability to the whole of life has been provided by that great non-Christian practitioner of Christianity in modern times — Mahatma Gandhi. Its central teaching is that Love is the Law of Life, and that the goal of man is to attain the perfection of the Father in Heaven, whose love enfolds and redeems all creation, the evil and the good, the just and the unjust. [32] Unfettered and understanding investigators into the life of the spirit in these days see in this the heart of the *Perennial Philosophy* that has lighted the path of humanity down the ages, the realization that those who are loving, pure in heart and poor in spirit, attain

31 Quoted by Gerald Heard in his *Code of Christ.*

32 I. R. 44.

to a Reality that underlies, as well as transcends, this world. It may be that in this code of Christ is enshrined the secret that can redeem and transform a world that is threatened with impending disaster.[33]

And in the Gospels is found another cryptic teaching of Christ, one of the most authentic of his recorded sayings, the model prayer that he taught his disciples. In it is contained the very heart of his gospel and the secret of its realization. This brief prayer, that has come rightly to be known as the Lord's Prayer[34] can be the uniting and rallying point of all those who seek to live the life of the spirit as he taught and lived it. Jesus' central message of the Kingdom of God would have been preserved in its perspicacity and would have worked out its leavening influence better if this prayer had been accepted as its sole creed, if its message had not been obscured and overlaid by beliefs and speculations about his person.

Yet it was inevitable that under the conditions and conceptions among which he lived such beliefs should have arisen. He himself was concerned about his place and function in the divine scheme of things as conceived by the Jewish mind in the course of its evolution. Here we touch upon one of the most controversial topics in the understanding and interpretation of the Gospel narratives. Holding to their belief in a divine vocation as God's chosen nation, the Jews throughout their chequered career had clung to the hope of God's miraculous intervention to visit and redeem His people. In its more popular

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33 I. R. 45.

34 I. R. 46. The Lord's Prayer.

forms it expressed itself in the expectation of a divinely appointed agent who will restore the kingdom to Israel. Various conceptions prevailed as to the nature and appearance of this *Messiah*. One was that he would be of the royal line of David, and it is in fulfilment of that hope that Jesus is acclaimed on certain occasions as the Son of David; and that is also why in two of the Gospels his genealogy is vainly traced to David. But the title that Jesus most frequently used of himself was another Messianic term, *The Son of Man*; and controversy has raged round the significance the term had for him. Some of his undoubted sayings about the manner and imminence of the appearance of this supernatural agent of God's intervention and judgment show that he shared the apocalyptic expectations of his day regarding a speedy and cataclysmic end of the world. Extreme advocates of this theory go to the extent of holding that his whole thought was dominated by the world-view associated with this and that the lofty teaching of the Sermon on the Mount was nothing but *interimsethic*, rules for the conduct of life in a world-order that was soon to pass away. Certain it is that elements of this hope entered into his conception of his role and determined the manner of his self-chosen death. But the idea of a suffering and dying Messiah, or more correctly, of a Servant of God passing through death to Messiahhood, was an original conception of his own. It seems to have come to him through meditation on some of the loftiest passages in the Old Testament prophecy, particularly the Servant Poems of Isaiah.[35] In more than one

35 See I. R. 30.

passage of his recorded teachings we hear him identifying himself with that picture of the Suffering Servant; and Christian piety is profoundly right in seeing in him a fulfilment of that ideal of God's chosen servant, bearing the sins of his fellowmen and through suffering and death bringing healing and redemption to mankind.

The records that we have make it abundantly clear that Jesus chose the time and manner of his death. At a certain stage in his career it became clear to him that he was going to be rejected by his people, that his lot was to be that of most of his predecessors in the prophetic line. But at his call, the baptism, he had become conscious of a relation to God higher than that of any who had gone before him. In one of his latest parables, that of the Vineyard,[36] he speaks of himself as the son of the Lord of the Vineyard, while the others were only servants. Grappling with this idea of the rejection even of the son, it dawned on him in another crisis of his life, the Transfiguration,[37] that he was to fulfil his mission through his own death. In the imagery of the account of this experience, which seems to have been shared in part by some of his closest followers, Jesus is pictured to have been clothed with divine glory and to have conversed with Moses and Elijah, the representatives of the Law and the Prophets in the old covenant. From this time on he is reported to have foretold his death and his rising again from the dead. These reports may have been coloured and amplified by what the disciples came to believe about

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[36] Mark 12.

[37] Mark 9. 22-13; I. R. 47.

him after his death and the experiences that followed it. But that Jesus felt himself to be a man of destiny, fulfilling in himself the divine purposes for his nation, there can be no doubt.

And so we read that he deliberately set his face to go to Jerusalem, fully knowing what was in store for himself at that citadel of his nation's faith. The disciples, we are told, were afraid as they followed.[38] The ancient narratives naively admit that the disciples often did not understand many of his words and deeds, throughout his life and particularly towards the climax of it. Their own minds were filled with expectations of earthly triumph. We read of two of them coming to him about this time with the request that they be allowed to sit the one on his right hand and the other on his left when he came into his kingdom. But he told them that the condition of participation in his kingdom was acceptance of the cup of suffering that he drank and that priority in his kingdom came through service and not domination. The Fourth Gospel records a beautiful object lesson that he gave his disciples of the standard of values in his kingdom when at his Last Supper with them he washed their feet.[39]

. On this his only visit to Jerusalem, according to the Synoptists whom we have followed in this narrative, Jesus openly declared himself to be the Jewish Messiah, but yet a Messiah of his own conception. In deliberate fulfilment of a Messianic prophecy,[40] he entered Jerusalem in a triumphal procession, riding upon an ass, which was the royal

38 Mark 10. 32.

39 John 13. 1-11; I. R. 48.

40 Mark 11. 1-10 and Zech 9. 9.

mount among the Jews. And he asserted his authority as God's Messiah by carrying through a cleansing of the Temple, which the greed of those in authority had converted during festivals into a den of thieves through the traffic in sacrificial goods within the sacred precincts. The Jewish leaders were not slow in taking up the challenge thus flung at them. Throughout an eventful week they were seeking for specific charges to bring against him, trying to trap him through questions regarding the religion and politics of his people. It was to one of these leading questions concerning submission to Roman authority that Jesus gave the clever, but at the same time, profound, answer: Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and unto God the things that are God's.[41] Temporal relations, he held, would adjust themselves when eternal relations are properly adjusted. It must have been his refusal to lend himself to the leadership of a political agitation that finally disillusioned one of his chosen twelve apostles, Judas Iscariot, causing him to go over to the enemy and to betray him. The secret that Judas betrayed must have been Jesus' claim to be the Messiah, and he was useful to the Jewish authorities in securing Jesus' arrest in the solitude of a garden whither he had retired to pray. That prayer in the Garden of Gethsmane reflects another crucial experience in the inner life of Jesus. It was there that he finally wrestled with the human shrinking from his dark fate and surrendered himself to the inscrutable will of God that seemed to demand the uttermost sacrifice from him. Faced with the bitter

[41] Mark 12. 17.

necessity of accepting death at the hands of his own people Jesus submitted to the will of God: Thy will not mine be done.[42]

The great drama swiftly moved to its denouement. Jesus was arrested at dead of night, the unfaithful apostle betraying him with a kiss. He was taken to the High-priest's residence and tried early in the morning before a hurriedly summoned *Sanhedrin* or council of the Jews. False witnesses were brought against him to prove that his teaching was subversive of religion, that he had threatened to destroy the Temple, the citadel of the nation's worship, and to set up in its place a temple not made with hands. This was distorting a truth he had spoken, to make a trap for fools, and Jesus maintained a dignified silence in the face of such charges. But when the High-priest, rising in his place, asked him the straight question: "Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?",[43] Jesus made a solemn declaration of his Messianic consciousness. His reply: "I am. And what is more, you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of God and coming with the clouds of heaven," is a clear indication of the faith in which he died and the hopes that sustained him at this supreme crisis in his life. But this was blasphemy to the Jews and the High-priest dramatically rent his clothes, and they all agreed that he was worthy of death.

But a sentence of death pronounced by the Sanhedrin had to be ratified by the Roman procurator. So Jesus was hurried before Pilate, the Roman governor. The charge brought up now was

42 Mark 14. 36.
43 Mark 14. 61 & 62.

one of treason, of conspiring to become king of the Jews. Here too, beyond a terse affirmation in answer to the Procurator's question whether he was king of the Jews, Jesus did not defend himself. Pilate, who was contemptuous of Jewish aspirations and who seems to have sensed the guiltlessness of the prisoner before him, offered to set him free as a concession to the people on the feast day. But the priests incited the people to shout that they wanted Jesus to be crucified, choosing instead Barabbas who had committed murder in a recent insurrection. "And Pilate, wishing to content the multitude, released unto them Barabbas, and delivered Jesus, when he had scourged him, to be crucified."[44]

Meanwhile a little incident had been enacted in the courtyard of the High-priest, which shows how utterly lost was the cause of Jesus at this time. Peter, the chief of his apostles, had been accused by the bystanders of being one of Jesus' followers. And Peter disowned his Master three times, cursing and swearing that he knew him not.[45] But, unlike the other apostle who betrayed him and in remorse went and hanged himself, Peter repented of his disloyalty and later became the foremost witness to the saving death and risen power of his master.

Jesus had thus to drink his cup of suffering in utter loneliness. His trust in his Father was the one thing that sustained him through it all. As was the practice in those brutal days, as a condemned prisoner he was baited and tortured by the Roman soldiers. They dressed him in mockery as a king, arraying him in purple and putting a crown of plaited thorns

44 Mark 15. 15.

45 Mark 14. 66-72.

on his head. They struck him on the head with a stick and bent their knees to him in mock homage. He was then made to carry his cross to the place of execution on the mount of Calvary outside the city gates.

Isaiah's noble prophecy about the chosen servant of God, wounded for the transgressions of his people and bearing their iniquities, must have been ringing in his ears all through this travail. Literally was he numbered with transgressors in his death, for there were two robbers crucified along with him, one on either side. Even they, we read, joined in the taunts of his triumphant enemies: "He saved others, himself he could not save."[46] The world has not seen a more perfect example of suffering love overcoming evil than Jesus' quiet submission to the will of God on the cross, and his prayer for those who were nailing him on to it: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they are doing."

Yet even his faith in his Loving Father was sorely tested at this time and came well nigh to breaking point. We can never hope to enter fully into the thoughts that sustained and moved this Son of God in the hour of his supreme agony. It may be that he expected divine intervention and exaltation to glory before death actually took place. Despair seems to have descended on him for a moment. The bitter cry of desolation from the cross could certainly not have been invented by any later believer, if it had not been actually uttered: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"[47] But Jesus triumphed

[46] Mark 15. 31.
[47] Mark 15. 34.

over even this final despair, finishing the course that had been ordained for him by his Heavenly Father with the great prayer: "Father into thy hands I commend my spirit."[48] Who that has imaginatively reconstructed for himself the course of that great career will not echo the testimony of a Roman centurion that watched beside the cross: "Truly this man was the Son of God"?[49]

And there was a glorious sequel to this supreme act of self-giving. The disciples left behind were naturally full of dismay. There never seems to have been a cause more hopelessly lost than that of Jesus. The state of mind of the disciples is vividly portrayed in a story told of the experience of two of them on the third day after the crucifixion. They were walking towards the village of Emmaus,[50] a little distance from Jerusalem, at eventide. And as they were sadly conversing about their disappointed hopes, a stranger joined them and enquired about the cause of their sorrow. To him they narrated "the things concerning Jesus of Nazareth, which was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people", of whom they had hoped that it was he who would redeem Israel, but how he had been done to death by the rulers of the Jews. Then it was that the stranger, whom they later knew to be an apparition of Jesus, opened their eyes to see how "it behoved the Christ to suffer these things and enter into his glory". The glow of faith returned to their hearts and they hurriedly returned to Jerusalem to report to the other disciples. "And as they spake these things he

[48] Luke 23. 46.
[49] Mark 15. 39.
[50] Luke 24. 13-35.

himself stood in the midst of them and said unto them, Peace be unto you."[51] Apparitions like these, — and a whole list of them is given by the Apostle Paul,[52] who is the earliest written authority on the subject — certainly lie behind the stories of the empty tomb and the rising again of the body of Jesus from the grave. That was the only explanation possible in the mental climate of that age of the psychic manifestations that undoubtedly followed the death of Jesus.

All the Gospels give accounts of the resurrection appearances of Jesus. The earliest of them, Mark, breaks off in its account of the visit to the tomb paid by certain women on the morning of the third day to embalm the body of their Master. On reaching it they found the stone of the rock-hewn grave rolled away, and a young man, arrayed in white apparel, apparently an angel, bade them not to be bewildered, as Jesus was risen and was gone to Galilee where his disciples were to meet him. The accounts differ as to the details of these appearances; but they, as well as the rest of New Testament literature and the consistent witness of the church that has been founded on this resurrection faith, agree in their testimony to the triumph over death, undoubtedly achieved by Jesus. Whatever be the scientific explanation of the nature and significance of these phenomena, death for Jesus proved to be the gateway to fuller life, and through it he has entered into the heart of mankind and lives there for ever as an energizing influence.

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51 Luke 24. 36.

52 1. Cor. 15. 3-8.

41. *The Magnificat* (St. Luke 1. 46-55).

And Marry said,
My soul doth magnify the Lord,
And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour.
For he hath regarded the low estate of his handmaiden:
For, behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed.
For he that is mighty hath done to me great things;
And holy is his name.
And his mercy is on them that fear him
From generation to generation.
He hath showed strength with his arm;
He hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts.
He hath put down the mighty from their seats,
And exalted them of low degree.
He hath filled the hungry with good things;
And the rich he hath sent empty away.
He hath holpen his servant Israel,
In remembrance of his mercy;
As he spake to our fathers,
To Abraham, and to his seed for ever.

42. *The Temptation of Jesus* (St. Matthew 4. 1-11).

Then was Jesus led up of the spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil. And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he was afterward an hungered. And when the tempter came to him, he said, If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread. But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God. Then the devil taketh him into the holy city, and setteth him on a pinnacle of the temple, and saith unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down: for it is written,

He shall give his angels charge concerning thee:
And in their hands they shall bear thee up,
Lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone.

Jesus said unto him, It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God. Again, the devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, and showeth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them; and saith unto him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me. Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve. Then the devil leaveth him, and, behold, angels came and ministered unto him.

43. *The Good Samaritan* (St. Luke 10. 25-37).

And, behold, a certain lawyer stood up, and tempted him, saying, Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life? He said unto him, What is written in the law? how readest thou? And he answering said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself. And he said unto him, Thou hast answered right: this do and thou shalt live. But he, willing to justify himself, said unto Jesus, And who is my neighbour? And Jesus answering said, A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho and fell among thieves, which stripped him of his raiment, and wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead. And by chance there came down a certain priest that way: and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. And likewise a Levite, when he was at the place, came and looked on him, and passed by on the other side. But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him, he had compassion on him, and went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him. And on the morrow when he departed, he took out two pence, and gave them to the host, and said unto him, Take care of him; and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again, I will repay thee. Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbour unto him that fell among the thieves? And he said, He that showed mercy on him. Then said Jesus unto him, Go, and do thou likewise.

44. *The Forgiving Father* (St. Luke 15. 11-32).

And he said, A certain man had two sons: and the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of goods

that falleth to me. And he divided unto them his living. And not many days after the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living. And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land; and he began to be in want. And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country; and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat: and no man gave unto him. And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants. And he arose and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him. And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son. But the father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet; and bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat and be merry: for this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry. Now his elder son was in the field: and as he came and drew nigh to the house, he heard music and dancing. And he called one of the servants, and asked what these things meant. And he said unto him, Thy brother is come; and thy father hath killed the fatted calf, because he hath received him safe and sound. And he was angry, and would not go in: therefore came his father out, and intreated him. And he answering said to his father, Lo, these many years do I serve thee, neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment: and yet thou never gavest me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends: but as soon as this thy son was come, which hath devoured thy living with harlots, thou hast killed for him the fatted calf. And he said unto him, Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine. It was meet that we should make merry, and be glad: for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found.

45. *The Beatitudes* (St. Matthew 5. 3-9).

And seeing the multitudes, he went up into a mountain: and when he was set, his disciples came to him: and he opened his mouth, and taught them saying,

Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.

Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.

Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.

Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.

Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.

Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.

46. *The Lord's Prayer* (St. Matthew 6. 9-13).

After this manner therefore pray ye:
Our Father which art in heaven,
Hallowed be thy name.
Thy kingdom come.
Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.
And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.

47. "*Neither do I condemn thee.*" (St. John 8. 2-11).

Jesus went unto the mount of Olives. And early in the morning he came again into the temple, and all the people came unto him; and he sat down, and taught them. And the scribes and Pharisees brought unto him a woman taken in adultery; and when they had set her in the midst, they say unto him, Master, this woman was taken in adultery, in the very act. Now Moses in the law commanded us, that such should be stoned: but what sayest thou? This they said, tempting him, that they might have to accuse him. But Jesus stooped down, and with his finger wrote on the ground, as though he heard them not. So when they continued asking him, he lifted up himself, and said unto them, He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her. And again he stooped down, and wrote on

the ground. And they which heard it, being convicted by their own conscience, went out one by one, beginning at the eldest, even unto the last: and Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst. When Jesus had lifted up himself, and saw none but the woman, he said unto her, Woman, where are those thine accusers? hath no man condemned thee? She said, No man, Lord. And Jesus said unto her, Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more.

48. *A Lesson in True Greatness* (St. John 13. 1-11).

Now before the feast of the passover, when Jesus knew that his hour was come that he should depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end. And supper being ended, the devil having now put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him; Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he was come from God, and went to God; he riseth from supper, and laid aside his garments; and took a towel, and girded himself. After that he poureth water into a basin, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded.

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So after he had washed their feet, and had taken his garment and was set down again, he said unto them, Know ye what I have done to you? Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am. If then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you.

THE JOHANNINE WRITINGS

"Last of all John, perceiving that the bodily facts had been set forth in the Gospels, being urged by his friends and inspired by the Spirit, composed *a spiritual gospel.*" So wrote a great teacher of the church in the second century, Clement of Alexandria, who in the formative epoch of Christianity was a pioneer in the reconciliation of Christian thought with Greek philosophy. It may be that this judgment will be endorsed by Indian thinkers in their efforts to link Christianity with Indian thought. For the Fourth Gospel was itself an attempt to interpret the significance of the person and work of Jesus of Nazareth in terms of Greek ideas, which have much in common with Hindu thought. And an outstanding English theologian[1] ventured the remark that the Gospel of John will not be rightly understood in modern times till India interprets it. That may be true; for whatever it is, the Fourth Gospel is not a plain historical narrative, like the first three, but is an interpretation in terms of the philosophy and the symbolism of the age in which it was written.

Its divergences from the Synoptic Gospels are many and marked. It was the last written of all the gospels and had a much more pronounced theological purpose than any of them. "These are written," concludes the writer, summing up his record of the 'signs' that Jesus did, "that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing

1. Bishop B. F. Westcott.

ye may have life in his name.[2] Unlike the others, it starts, not with the public ministry or even with the birth of Jesus, but with his pre-existence with God, as the eternal *Logos*,[3] and the manifestation of that principle of Life and Light in the world in human form. "The Word became flesh, and dwelt among us (and we beheld his glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father), full of grace and truth," says the Prologue to the gospel,[4] declaring at the outset the whole *motif* of the writing. The central theme of Jesus' teaching, as recorded in the other gospels, the good news of the Kingdom of God, is hardly mentioned in this. Instead, it is wholly concerned with setting forth the claims of the Incarnate Word of God, as the Giver of Life and Light to the world, as the Way, the Truth and the Life, apart from whom no man cometh to the Father, belief in

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[2] John 20. 31.

[3] The Logos idea is a very ancient one, dating back from the time of Heraclitus of Ephesus (535-475 B.C.). It was taken up and developed by the Stoics. In both Greek and Stoic thought it savoured distinctly of pantheistic mysticism, Logos being the immanent principle of reason or law in the universe. Philo, the Alexandrian Jew, attempted to reconcile this pagan idea with the Hebrew concept of *Memra* or the Word of God. His amalgamation of divergent Platonic, Stoic and Hebrew ideas was rather external and superficial. But he was very fertile in forms of expression and his expressions have been adopted by the writer of the Fourth Gospel and by St. Paul. It has been said that almost every word in the Prologue might be parallelled from Philo. This attempt at reconciliation certainly gives the sanction to similar efforts in modern days at reconciling Christian with Indian thought. (For a good discussion of the development of the Logos idea see Dean Inge in the *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*).

[4] I. R. 49 (John 1. 1-14).

whom as the transcendent revealer is the way of salvation. These claims are set forth in a series of long discourses, totally unlike the pithy sayings and homely parables, without which Jesus is said to have taught nothing, in the Synoptic Gospels. Further, the miracles of healing, which the faith of suffering fellowmen almost wrung out of him because of his compassion for them, become in this gospel *signs* manifesting the glory of the divine Son of God, signs which he expects to generate faith.

It is no wonder that the date, authorship and authenticity of the Johannine writings — for in addition to the gospel there are three epistles by the same writer — have been a bone of contention among New Testament scholars, and there is yet no consensus of opinion regarding these questions.[5]

But these scholarly and theological questions apart, there are few books of the Bible which are more widely read and have afforded more consolation

[5] A very early and unanimous tradition connects the Fourth Gospel with Ephesus as the place of its origin. Internal evidence from the problems it tackles, the false doctrines (Docetism, etc.) which it, and more specially the Epistles, controvert, also point to Ephesus and the close of the first or the beginning of the second century as the place and time of its writing. It was apparently the work of an old and revered teacher of the Ephesian church, who had stood in close relation to some of the Apostles, had himself perhaps "seen the Lord". The last chapter of the Gospel (ch. 21), which is clearly a later addition, an attestation of its worth and authenticity by the Ephesian elders, wrongly identifies him with the 'Beloved Disciple' to whom the writing is ascribed. The general trend of scholarly opinion is to attribute it, not to John, the Apostle, the Son of Zebedee, but to John the Elder, referred to in many early Christian writings, and to the close of the first century A.D.

and sustaining faith to ordinary believers than these Johannine writings. They have especially been the sustenance of Christian mysticism. The symbolisms of the Fourth Gospel, depicting Jesus as the Good Shepherd, as the True Vine, of whom the believers are the branches,[6] and as the Bread of Life which giveth life to the world, have provided material for Christian meditation and devotion as nothing else in the Bible. Also, in spite of its philosophical and mystical character, it is as much steeped in ethics as any other book of the Hebrew-Christian Scriptures. The unity with the Godhead that Jesus claims is more a moral than a metaphysical unity. "If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love".[7] And its demand of ethical conduct from those who claim to love God is as clear-cut as in any of the other Biblical writers: "If ye love me, ye will keep my commandments;" and "this is my commandment that ye love one another, even as I have loved you."[8] The author is even more explicit on this fundamental Christian emphasis in the epistle that bears his name[9]: "If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar; for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, cannot love God whom he hath not seen. And this commandment have we from him, that he that loveth God love his brother also."[10]

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[6] I. R. 50 (John 15. 1-13).
[7] John 15. 10.
[8] John 14. 15 and 15. 12.
[9] I. R. 51 I John 2. 7-17.
[10] I John 4. 20 & 21.

49. *Prologue to the Fourth Gospel* (John 1. 1-14).

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not anything made that hath been made. In him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in the darkness; and the darkness apprehended it not. There came a man, sent from God, whose name was John. The same came for witness, that he might bear witness of the light, that all might believe through him. He was not that light, but came that he might bear witness of the light. There was the true light, even the light which lighteth every man, coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not. He came unto his own, and they that were his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he the right to become children of God, even to them that believe on his name: which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us (and we beheld his glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father), full of grace and truth.

50. *Abiding in Christ* (John 15. 1-13).

I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit, he taketh it away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he cleanseth it, that it may bear more fruit. Already ye are clean because of the word which I have spoken unto you. Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; so neither can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same beareth much more fruit: for apart from me ye can do nothing. If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and they gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned. If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatsoever ye will, and it shall be done unto you. Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit;

and so shall ye be my disciples. Even as the Father hath loved me, I also have loved you: abide ye in my love. If ye keep my commandments ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love. These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be fulfilled. This is my commandment, that ye love one another, even as I have loved you. Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.

51. *True Light and Darkness* (I John 2. 7-17).

Beloved, no new commandment write I unto you, but an old commandment which ye had from the beginning: the old commandment is the word which ye heard. Again, a new commandment write I unto you, which thing is true in him and in you; because the darkness is passing away, and the true light already shineth. He that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in the darkness even until now. He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him. But he that hateth his brother is in the darkness, and walketh in the darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because the darkness hath blinded his eyes.

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Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the vainglory of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.

CHAPTER XII

NEW TESTAMENT CHRISTIANITY

The Acts of the Apostles & the Epistles

The rise of Christianity as a religion centred in the person of the crucified Jesus is one of the most stupendous marvels in the whole story of mankind. If ever there was a disorganized and disspirited band of disciples left behind by a religious leader it was the group that had gathered round Jesus. The shepherd had been smitten and the sheep were scattered. Yet within a few days after the disaster of the cross these same disheartened and disillusioned men are found gathered together at the very citadel of the enemies who had done away with their master. They were not only defying triumphant Jewish authority, but filling all Jerusalem with their teaching.[1] We are told that the rulers of the Jews marvelled at the boldness of these unlearned and ignorant men and that they took knowledge of them that they had been with Jesus.[2] Obviously something remarkable had occurred to work this transformation.

The explanation the apostles themselves had to give was that their master who had been done to death by cruel and violent hands had been raised from the dead by God and that they were witnesses to his resurrection. Devout believers in the Old Testament, they interpreted these happenings as having taken place in fulfilment of prophecy. Their

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1 Acts 5. 28.

2 Acts 4. 13.

eyes were now opened to see the meaning of the faith in which their Master had embraced his death, the faith that it was necessary for the Messiah to suffer such things and to enter into his glory.[3] That he had thus entered into glory, had been exalted to the right hand of God and would thence speedily return to restore all things,[4] was the sum and substance of their message, boldly proclaimed in the hearing of all Jerusalem. These things, they believed, had been attested to them by the visions they had seen of the risen Jesus. In the last of these, as he was being taken up into heaven, they saw two men in white apparel, angels apparently, assuring them that "this Jesus, which was received up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye beheld him going into heaven."[5]

Other psychic experiences also accompanied these visions. One of these which impressed them and their hearers most was the "gift of tongues", of glossolalia or ecstatic utterance, whereby it is claimed that their testimony was understood in their several languages by the crowd of Jews of the Dispersion assembled at Jerusalem for the feast of the Pentecost from all parts of the Roman Empire. The Apostle Peter, spokesman of the disciples, saw in this also a fulfilment of prophecy, the outpouring of the Spirit of God upon all flesh in the last days as foretold by one of the prophets.[6] This and other gifts of the spirit continued to be a feature of Christianity in its first fervent days. Though highly prized

[3] Luke 24. 26.
[4] Acts 2. 22-36 and 3. 13-21.
[5] Acts 1. 11.
[6] Acts 2. 15-21 and Joel 2. 28-32.

throughout the New Testament times, and still cherished by Christian people as a sign of divine grace, such outward manifestations were duly assessed by the more discerning of the New Testament teachers, notably by Paul, and regarded as subordinate to the graces of the inner life, to the higher fruits of the spirit, like love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness and temperance.[7] The whole significance of the early Christian experience of the risen Jesus and of possession by his living spirit has yet to be studied and interpreted in the light of fuller modern knowledge of psychic phenomena and of mystic experiences in other religions.

But whatever be their final explanation, these experiences were powerful and valid enough to launch the Christian movement upon the world. That movement inevitably took a Jewish form and colouring at the outset. The first Christians were devout Jews, complying with Jewish observances, with only the burning conviction added that their crucified master was the promised Messiah and that he would soon return as the judge and lord of all mankind. He was the stone whom the builders of Jewish religion had rejected, but whom God had made the head of the corner.[8] This faith was strong enough to make them endure cheerfully in the name of Jesus the persecution which soon broke out. The vision seen by Stephen, the first martyr in this persecution, when at his dying moment he beheld "the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing on the right hand of

7 Galatians 5. 22-23 and 1 Cor. 12.
8 Acts 4. 11.

God ",[9] reveals both the faith that sustained them and the ardent expectations they entertained.

These were expectations of the speedy end of all things, with the return of Jesus in glory. Mainly because of these, but partly also as an expression of the spirit of the master who had lived the law of love, the early disciples practised a sort of communism among themselves. We are told that "the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and one soul: and not one of them said that aught of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things in common."[10] This fervent spirit of fellowship, binding the believers together, was one of the chief characteristics of the early Christian community. The breaking of bread together, in continuation of Jesus' eucharistic meal with his disciples, was the outward symbol of this inner bond of unity between the early believers. Later, when Christianity spread out into the world beyond Judaism and took into its fold the unprivileged masses of the Roman Empire, this bond of fellowship was so marked a feature that observers remarked: "See how these Christians love one another", and it contributed not a little to the final victory of the Nazarene over his rivals.

But the faith had to overcome dangers from within as well as from without. There was the very real danger that the new wine of Jesus' teaching might be put into the old wine-skins of Judaism; that Christianity might develop as a sect within the old faith, maintaining the externals of Jewish

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[9] Acts 7. 56.

[10] Acts 4. 32.

observances, with only the faith in Jesus as the Messiah added. We read in The Acts that the believers continued steadfastly with one accord in the Temple, observing the regular hours of Temple prayers. The ascendancy of James, the brother of the Lord, a devout Jew respected even by the orthodox for his piety, as the head of the Jerusalem church, betokened the danger of the new faith being tied down to a hereditary hierarchy and of its remaining a Jewish sect. But the spirit of their Master, which to the early believers was a living reality, guided them along new and adventurous paths. It has been said that throughout The Acts of the Apostles we can hear of the click of opening doors. Peter, the foremost apostle and one of the pillars of the Jerusalem church, had a vision by which he was shown that God is no respecter of persons, but that every one who truly calls upon him in every nation is acceptable to Him.[11] This was direct guidance to him to admit into the full fellowship of believers an uncircumcised Roman centurion of Caesarea. Samaritans, Ethiopian proselytes and others, who professed belief in Jesus as the Messiah began to be freely admitted into the church, their acceptance being ratified from on high by the outpouring of the spirit of God upon them as upon Jewish believers.

Nevertheless, this recognition of the full liberty of those who believe in Christ, their freedom from bondage to the Jewish Law, was not achieved without a bitter and prolonged struggle. The protagonist of this freedom was a new convert to Christianity, one of the most dominant figures who have

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[11] Acts 10. 34.

left their mark upon Christian history. This was Saul the Jew, whose surname was Paul, and who though not one of the Twelve Apostles became the chief of all those who have borne that name. Saul belonged to the strictest sect of the Pharisees, zealous concerning the Law and a determined enemy of the new faith in its early days. He was a born Roman citizen, belonging to the town of Tarsus in Cilicia, but had his rabbinical training under one of the most distinguished of Jewish Rabbis, Gamaliel of Jerusalem. Saul makes his first appearance in the New Testament as one consenting to the death of the first Christian martyr, Stephen, and as the most energetic of the early Jewish persecutors of Christianity, working havoc among the believers. But he was arrested in mid-career, as it were, of his persecuting zeal by a vision of the crucified and exalted Jesus; [12] and, as he later put it, he was not disobedient to the heavenly vision. His experience of sudden conversion and his interpretation of it as a miracle of grace in transforming personality have fixed the norm for a great deal of later Christian experience. If ever there was an instance of a twice-born Christian it was St. Paul. But those who regard this experience of sudden conversion as the norm of Christian experience are often apt to overlook the later experiences of this mystic, the years of solitary discipline and spiritual exercises by which this sudden change in him was consolidated and he became so identified with the crucified and risen Saviour that he could say "I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me."

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[12] I. R. 52 (Acts 9. 1-22).

More than half the book of The Acts of the Apostles is taken up with the story of the labours of this latest but chief of the apostles, labours which carried Christianity from Palestine to most of the strategic centres of the Roman Empire. And the major part of the New Testament is composed of the letters that he wrote to the churches that he founded in those centres. The book of Acts is believed to have been written by Luke, "the beloved physician" and a travelling companion of the Apostle Paul. In it is embodied a travel-diary of the author which covers part of the many journeys of the apostle and gives an eye-witness account of some of the varied experiences of this pioneer missionary, who describes himself as "in journeyings often, in perils of rivers, in perils of robbers, in perils from my countrymen, in perils from the Gentiles, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in labour and travail, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness."[13]

There are fourteen books in the New Testament, traditionally attributed to the apostle Paul; but not all of them are genuinely so and few have come down in the form and order in which they emerged from the fiery brain of this man who was constrained by the love of Christ and consumed with the care of the churches he had founded. But the genuine ones bear the unmistakable stamp of this fervent devotee of Christ. They are all rightly called "epistles" and were literally poured forth to meet the

[13] 2. Cor. 11. 26 & 27.

exigencies and needs of the churches, anxiety for whose upbuilding in the faith pressed heavily upon this master-builder of Christianity in its formative years. The earliest of them, 1 & 2 Thessalonians depict the life of an infant Christian community gathered from the corrupt gentile population of a Graceo-Roman city in the first century A.D. They are especially of interest as reflecting the ardent belief, shared by missionary and convert alike, of the imminent return of the ascended Christ to judge the world and inaugurate the heavenly order of things. "For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven, with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we that are alive, that are left, shall together with them be caught up in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we be ever with the Lord."[14] This hope is repeated in a later epistle, 1 Corinthians (15. 51 & 52), showing how prevalent and deep-rooted was this belief. The two letters to the Corinthians are in some ways the most personal and self-revealing of all the epistles, revealing the stresses he passed through, as well as the sustaining strength that upheld him in the midst of them all. The epistles to the Galatians and the Romans are more in the nature of theological treatises, wherein he develops the Christian Gospel as the antithesis of the Jewish Law and establishes for all time the freedom of the believer, justified by faith in Christ, from bondage to the Law. Couched too much in terms of Jewish rabbinical lore and Roman legalism, the plain teachings of Jesus regarding the Kingdom of God and

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[14] 1 Thessalonians 4. 16 & 17.

the Divine Fatherhood are too often overlaid by legalistic casuistry, a crust which has often choked the very spirit of liberty which the apostle advocated. But through it all shines and speaks the spirit of the great liberator, for whom Christ has broken down the middle wall of partition, offering to all, Jew and Gentile alike, the free gift of salvation through faith in his name. And imbedded in these theological disquisitions and topical admonitions are gems of truth, valid for all time, and the testimony of a soul that had been set on fire by a single-hearted devotion to his Lord and Master. Among such "gems of purest ray serene" in all religious literature, is the great *Hymn to Charity* in the Epistle to the Corinthians.[15] It has been said that in it the great devotee of Jesus was unconsciously painting a portrait of his Master, the embodiment on earth of the seeking, saving love of God, beseeching all men to be reconciled to God and to one another. Another passage setting forth in classical language the duties of Christian discipleship is found in the Epistle to the Romans.[16] His vision of a regenerated humanity, as the Body of Christ, "fitly framed together and builded together for a habitation of God," and "filled with all the fulness of God," remains yet the goal of Christian endeavour.[17] Through his writings and above all through the example of his heroic life of self-sacrificing devotion to his Master, St. Paul has left an indelible stamp upon Christianity.

The book of The Acts leaves Paul as a prisoner in Rome, "preaching the Kingdom of God and

15 I. R. 53.

16 I. R. 54.

17 Ephesians 2. 21 & 3. 19.

teaching the things concerning the Lord Jesus Christ, with all boldness, none forbidding him ".[18] Very early and unanimous tradition presents him as having suffered martyrdom in Rome. This most probably occurred during the early years of the reign of Nero, in 57 or 58 A.D., before the outbreak of the general onslaught on Christians by that cruel emperor. In what, if genuine, is the latest of his writings, 2 Timothy, we listen to the very words of the final triumph song of this soldier of Jesus Christ: "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give to me at that day: and not to me only, but also to all them that have loved his appearing." [19]

If tradition is to be trusted the work of Paul at Rome was taken up and consolidated by no less prominent an apostle than Peter himself. The Acts of the Apostles leaves the story of Peter with the account of his miraculous deliverance from prison in Jerusalem, about 44 A.D. and his consequent departure from Judea. But in the Epistles of Paul there are references to his missionary journeys in the wider Roman world. The Roman Church claims him to have been its first Bishop, the Popes of Rome claiming unbroken succession from him. Most probably he established himself in Rome after the death of Paul. The epistles ascribed to him purport to be written from there, Babylon being the symbolic name by which that great rival to the City of God

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[18] Acts 28. 31.

[19] 2 Timothy 4. 7 & 8.

was known in Christian literature of the period. Of these two general epistles, the second is now agreed to be spurious. The genuineness of the first is also questioned, but it seems to embody the teachings of one who was an eye-witness to the patient endurance of the Master and who had been specially commissioned to tend the flock of Christ. Internal and external evidence points to the epistle in its present form as having been written to encourage the Christians in Asia Minor to stand firm during the general persecution of Christians under Emperor Domitian (c. 90 A.D.). The conditions depicted tally remarkably with those described by Pliny, the Roman governor of Bithynia, in his famous letter to Emperor Trajan, asking for instructions in dealing with the Christians. This letter, dated 112 A.D., speaks of the Christians who had apostasized even twenty years earlier, evidently during the Domitian persecutions. The best explanation of the facts seems to be that while the central teaching of the book came from the great apostle, who according to tradition died a martyr in the persecution under Nero (c. 62 A.D.), it was elaborated in its present form, in elegant Greek, by the scribe Silvanus, and sent as a message of encouragement to the Christians under trial, in the name of the great apostle.

The same conditions are reflected in another of the outstanding books of the New Testament, The Epistle to the Hebrews, also traditionally attributed to Paul; but its authorship was questioned from the beginning and it is now admitted to be not by him. It was not really an epistle, but an elaborate sermon preached on the theme that Jesus is the great high priest, who has done away with the symbols and

shadows that pointed to him in the Old Testament sacrificial system and has opened to believers a new and living way of access to God. The validity of the sacrificial system and the need for atonement are taken for granted — "without shedding of blood there is no remission of sins." But what was imperfect and inadequate in the old was perfected by the new, the blood of the New Covenant. Jesus is presented as the crown and fulfilment of God's revelation to man, the Son through whom God has finally spoken to man, reflecting the full effulgence of His glory. Proof-texts are cited and allegorical explanations given to many Old Testament passages in order to prove the author's contention that Jesus was the fulfilment of the slow and gradual revelation through the Old Covenant. But the primary object of the sermon was not theological but practical. It was to strengthen the faith of Christian believers who were being submitted to a sore testing of their faith under the Roman persecutions. The Christian is to look upon the sufferings that come upon him as evidence of the Lord's care for him, disciplining him for the high privilege of sonship.[20] He is to fix his eyes steadfastly on Jesus, the Pioneer and Perfector of the faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross and has been exalted to glory. A long and glowing list is given of the heroes of faith in Israel's long history, who all endured in hope and so have obtained promises from God.[21] The charm and power of the book lies not in its theology, which in many ways has been outmoded,

[20] Hebrews 12. 7.
[21] I. R. 55.

but in its ability to inspire heroic and self-sacrificing faith in God and undying loyalty to the principles of Jesus.

Another book, also purporting to be a general epistle, but in reality a collection of sermons, is the Epistle of James. The author is supposed to be James, " the brother of the Lord ". But its authenticity was early questioned and it is now generally held to be not by James, the brother of Jesus. Absence of any personal references to Jesus and a rhetorical Greek style, free from all Aramaisms, are strong arguments against the imputed authorship. Nor is there any reference to the long controversy between Jewish and Gentile Christianity in which James, one of the pillars of the Jerusalem Church was a protagonist. But the author, probably a Greek Christian who also bore the name James, controverts some of the wrong tendencies that developed from the writings of Paul. As against Paul's doctrine of justification by faith, he emphasizes the need of works as a test of faith. " Faith apart from works is dead," he asserts. This emphasis on the social expression of Christianity is one that commends itself to the modern mind, though earlier generations were inclined to accept Luther's characterization of it as " an epistle of straw ". Far from being that, it is a writing of great practical power, reminding the Christians of the ethical and moral aspects of the Gospel of Jesus and recalling the moral challenge of the Old Testament prophets, which is one of the central strands in the message of the Bible as a whole.[22]

[22] I. R. 56.

"I tell you the Bible does not end in Timothy; it ends in Revolutions," said a young girl to her sister, disputing as to which is the last book of the Bible. This was an unwitting truth, for The Book of Revelation, which sets the seal to the whole collection, is most revolutionary in its expectations and its visions of the end. Only the revolution is achieved not through human might or power, but by the Spirit of the Living God, who broods as it were over the whole process of creation, redemption and restoration as depicted in the Bible. Readers of this narrative will have noticed an undercurrent of supernaturalism running through most of the books of the Bible and colouring the thoughts of even its greatest personalities. In the very greatest of them it is held in check and corrected by a present experience of the Eternal here and now within the temporal, of the still, small voice, speaking, not in thunder or earthquake, but in the heart of the listening soul, of the Kingdom of God within. But the hope of a kingdom, not fashioned by human hands, but descending all complete from on high, often found expression in the Jewish faith, especially in times of great stress and travail, when men despaired of human efforts. This hope, born of despair of the God within, finds utterance in some of the less inspired passages of the Old Testament prophets, notably in the apocalyptic writings. And here in the last book of the Bible we have a Christian apocalypse, a vision of God's final deliverance of His people out of a world of sin and suffering. Although discredited time and again by the course of history, which has shown that God's inscrutable purposes are beyond the imaginings of man, such visions of a cataclysmic end of the world

and of a supernatural kingdom, have sustained the hope and courage of believers throughout Christian history.

Like the other books of the Bible the Apocalypse was also written to meet a particular need and situation. Christian leaders at the beginning of the era seem to have fondly hoped that their faith might find protection from the Roman Empire. Luke pictures Paul as successfully appealing to Caesar against the fury of Judaism and leaves him a prisoner in Rome, yet freely preaching the Gospel, none forbidding him. Paul himself in one of his letters specifically refers to the Roman power as a great restraining influence holding the forces of lawlessness in check.[23] But that hope was blasted when the storm of persecution broke upon the Christian communities scattered all over the empire. Under Emperor Domitian Christians began to be persecuted for their faith. They were offered the choice of death or of offering worship to the image of the Emperor. This latter the Christians would not do, though, as we learn from Pliny's letter to Trajan, many apostatized to save their lives. This Christian apocalypse was written like 1 Peter and Hebrews "to strengthen the weak hands and confirm the feeble knees, and to say to them that are of a fearful heart: Be strong, fear not, behold your God will come with vengeance, with the recompense of God; He will come and save you."[24] For the hope held out is a speedy return of the Messiah, of "the Lamb of God, slain from the foundation of the world,"[25] to execute God's judgment

[23] 2 Thessalonians 2. 7.
[24] Isaiah 35. 3 cited in Heb. 12. 12.
[25] Rev. 13. 8.

upon earth. This great culmination of human history, with all the horrors preceding it, is pictured in the familiar imagery of the Jewish apocalypses. The book is a series of striking pictures depicting the course of Christianity's painful struggle with paganism and the organized forces of evil and of its ultimate triumph. Rome, the great enemy, is pictured as a Beast rising out of the sea, with ten horns and seven heads, blasphemies proceeding out of its mouth. Those who worship the Beast are marked with its sign and are doomed to God's vengeance. In another striking image the imperial city is presented as the Great Harlot, riding upon the Beast, drunk with the blood of the saints, and intoxicating the inhabitants of the earth with the wine of her adultery. There is great jubilation in heaven over the fall of Babylon: "Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great,. . . .in a single hour is thy judgment come."[26] The world drama swiftly moves to its predestined finale. Bowl after bowl of God's wrath is poured upon the earth. Only the Elect, those who are sealed with the seal of the living God and have washed themselves white in the blood of the Lamb, are saved out of this tribulation. Finally the Great Enemy of God and man is conquered, bound and cast into the Lake of Fire, along with his accomplices and worshippers. Then in a grand picture, one of the most powerful and poetic passages in all literature, the earth is pictured as the dwelling place of God, suffering and sorrow, pain and death being all finally overcome. The Book of Revelation is thus a fitting conclusion to the Bible, which began

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[26] Rev. 18. 2 and 18. 10.

with a description of the creation of the universe and a setting forth of the divine purpose, and ends with a glorious picture of the ultimate realization of that purpose, when the tabernacle of God is established on earth and he shall dwell with them and they shall be his peoples and God himself shall be with them and be their God." [27]

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[27] I. R. 57 Rev: 21: 1-7.

52. *The Conversion of Saul* (Acts 9. 1-22).

And Saul, yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went unto the highpriest, and desired of him letters to Damascus to the synagogues, that if he found any of this way, whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound unto Jerusalem. And as he journeyed, he came near Damascus: and suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven: and he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying, unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks. And he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do. And the men which journeyed with him stood speechless, hearing a voice, but seeing no man. And Saul arose from the earth; and when his eyes were opened, he saw no man: but they led him by the hand, and brought him to Damascus. And he was three days without sight, and neither did eat nor drink.

And there was a certain disciple at Damascus, named Ananias; and to him said the Lord in a vision, Ananias. And he said, Behold, I am here, Lord. And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the street which is called Straight, and inquire in the house of Judas for one called Saul, of Tarsus: for, behold, he prayeth, and hath seen in a vision a man named Ananias coming in, and putting his hand on him, that he might receive his sight. Then Ananias answered, Lord, I have heard by many of this man, how much evil he hath done to thy saints at Jerusalem: and here he hath authority from the chief priests to bind all that call on thy name. But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel: for I will show him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake. And Ananias went his way, and entered into the house; and putting his hands on him said: Brother

Saul, the Lord, even Jesus, that appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest, hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost. And immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales: and he received his sight forthwith, and arose, and was baptized.

53. *The Hymn of Love* (I Corinthians 13).

Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.

Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.

Charity never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away. For we know in part, and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away. When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things. For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known. And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity.

54. *The Duties of Christian Discipleship* (Romans 12).

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God.

For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith. For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office: so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another. Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith; or ministry, let us wait on our ministering: or he that teacheth, on teaching; or he that exhorteth, on exhortation: he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that showeth mercy, with cheerfulness.

Let love be without dissimulation. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good. Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another; not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord; rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer; distributing to the necessity of saints; given to hospitality. Bless them which persecute you: bless, and curse not. Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep. Be of the same mind one toward another. Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate. Be not wise in your own conceits. Recompense to man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men. If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men. Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.

55. *The Heroes of Faith* (Hebrews 11).

Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. For by it the elders obtained a good report. Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.

By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous,

God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaketh. By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him: For before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God. But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him. By faith, Noah being warned of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark for the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith. By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went. By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise: for he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God..

These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country. And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned. But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city.

* * * *

And what more shall I say? for the time would fail me to tell of Gideon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthae, of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets: who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. Women received their dead raised to life again: and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection: and others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment: they were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about

in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented; (of whom the world was not worthy): they wandered in deserts and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth. And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise: God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect.

Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.

56. *Pure Religion and Undefiled* (James 1. 19-27).

Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath: for the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God. Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls. But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. For if any man be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: for he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was. But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed. If any man among you seem to be religious and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain. Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.

57. *The Consummation of All Things* (Revelation 21. 1-7).

And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea. And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of

heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away. And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful. And he said unto me, It is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst the fountain of the water of life freely. He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son.

APPENDIX I

THE BOOKS OF THE BIBLE

THE OLD TESTAMENT

Genesis
Exodus
Leviticus
Numbers
Deuteronomy
Joshua
Judges
Ruth
1 Samuel
2 Samuel
1 Kings
2 Kings
1 Chronicles
2 Chronicles
Ezra
Nehemiah
Esther
Job
Psalms
Proverbs
Ecclesiastes
Song of Songs
Isaiah
Jeremiah
Lamentations
Ezekiel
Daniel
Hosea
Joel
Amos
Obadiah
Jonah
Micah
Nahum
Habakkuk
Zephaniah
Haggai
Zechariah
Malachi

THE APOCRYPHA

1 Esdras
2 Esdras
Tobit
Judith
The Rest of Esther
The Wisdom of Solomon
Ecclesiasticus
Baruch
The Song of the Three Holy Children
The History of Susanna
Bel and the Dragon
The Prayer of Manasseh
1 Maccabees
2 Maccabees

THE NEW TESTAMENT

St. Matthew
St. Mark
St. Luke
St. John
The Acts
Romans
1 Corinthians
2 Corinthians
Galatians
Ephesians
Philippians
Colossians
1 Thessalonians
2 Thessalonians
1 Timothy
2 Timothy
Titus
Philemon
Hebrews
James
1 Peter
2 Peter
1 John
2 John
3 John
Jude
Revelation

APPENDIX II

A CHRONOLOGICAL CHART

Dates B. C.	Chief Events & Personalities in Hebrew History	Events & Personalities Outside	Inscriptions & Literature
c. 2100	Call of Abraham	Hammurabi, King of Babylon	*Code of Hammurabi*
c. 1850	Hebrew Migration to Egypt: Jacob, Joseph	Hyksos Dynasty in Egypt	
1580		Expulsion of the Hyksos from Egypt	
1440	The Exodus: Moses	Amenhotep II (Pharaoh of the Exodus)	
1400	Capture of Jericho: Joshua	Akhnaton of Egypt	*Tell-el-Amarna Tablets*
1380 to 1100	The Period of the Judges: Deborah, Gideon, Samson, Samuel	Philistine Supremacy over Palestine	*The Song of Deborah etc.*

1025	Rise of the Hebrew Monarchy: King Saul			
1010	King David			
970	King Solomon			
933	Division of the Kingdom		Rise of Assyrian Power: Shalmanezer III	Inscription in Temple at Karnak tells of Shishak's invasion of Palestine
874	Ahab, King of Israel:	*Elijah*		Black Obelisk of Shalmanezer shows Jehu paying homage
840	Jehu's rebellion:	*Elisha*		
782	Prosperity & corruption in Israel: Jeroboam II:	*Amos* *Hosea*	Tiglath Pileser III of Assyria Samaria destroyed by Sargon	*Amos, Hosea*
721	Captivity of Israel. Kings Ahaz & Hezekiah of Judah	*Micah* *Isaiah I*	Sennacherib invades Judah	Sennacherib's Cylinder, recording his campaign
701	Great deliverance of Jerusalem from Sennacherib			

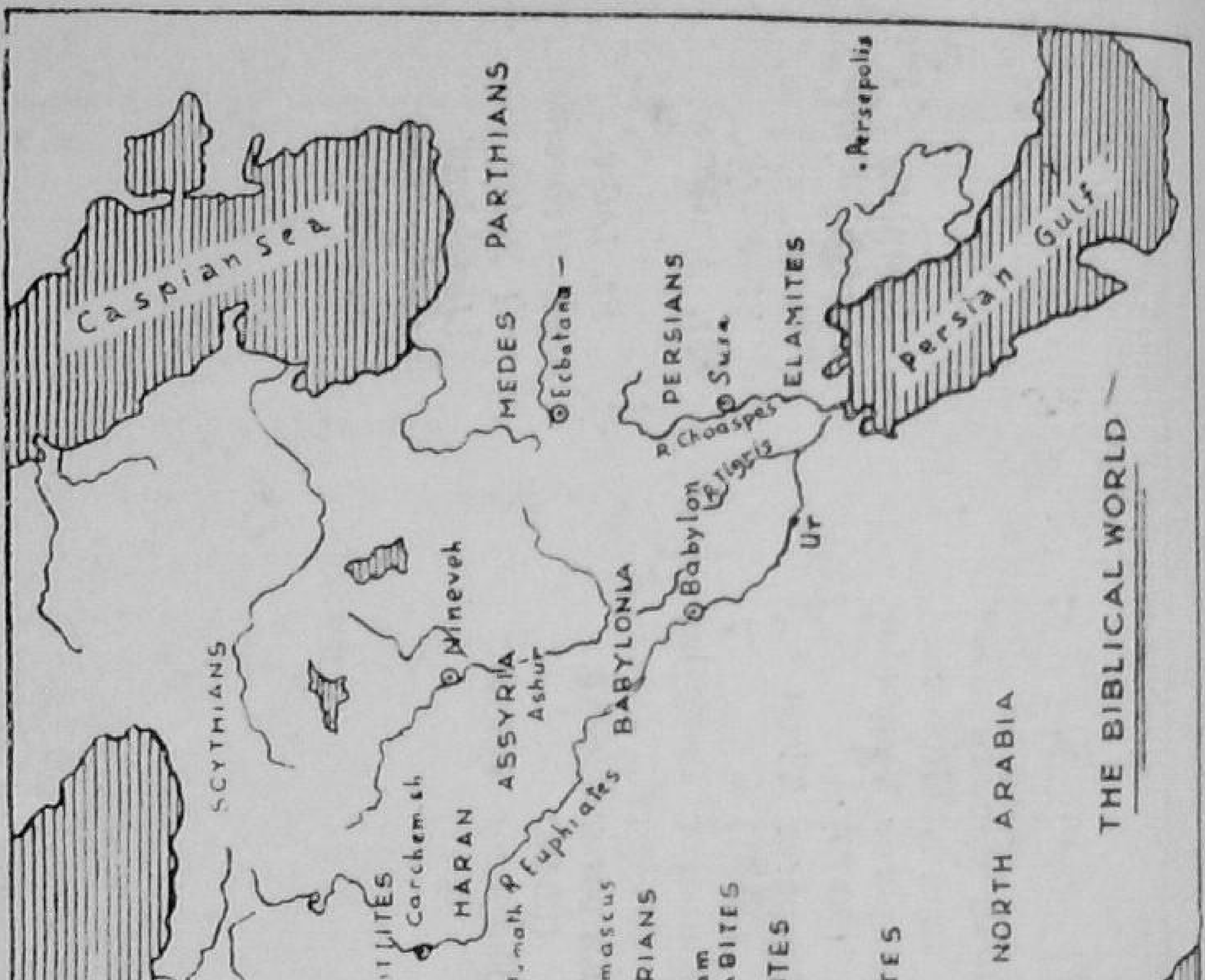
621	The Reformation under King Josiah	*Jeremiah*	Rise of Babylon:	*Isaiah 1-39* *Micah* *Deuteronomic Code*
			Fall of Nineveh: Nebuchadrezzer	*Jeremiah* *Zephaniah*
608	Death of Josiah			
605			Battle of Carchemish: Fall of Egypt	
597	Capture of Jerusalem by Nebuchadrezzer			
586	End of the Southern Kingdom: Babylonian Exile (586-536)	*Ezekiel*		*Ezekiel*
		Isaiah II	Fall of Babylon: Cyrus of Persia	Cylinder of Cyrus *Isaiah 40-66*
536	Some Jews return to Jerusalem: Zerubabel	*Zechariah*	Darius I	
516	The Second Temple Dedicated	*Habakkuk, Obadiah*		
444	Nehemiah, Governor of Judea			
397	Ezra returns			

331 to 198	Jews under the Ptolemaic Kings of Egypt	End of Persian Rule: Alexander's conquest of Palestine	
198		Antiochus III defeats Ptolemy IV	
198–129	Jews under the Seleucids of Syria		
175		Antiochus Epiphanes Persecution of the Jews	
168	Desecration of the Temple		*Daniel*
167	Maccabean revolt begins		
165	Temple rededicated		
143	Simon, the Maccabee: High Priest and King		
129–63	Complete independence under the Hasmonean dynasty		
63	Jews come under Roman rule	Pompey enters Jerusalem	
37	Herod the Great, King of Judea		
20	Building the Third Temple started-completed A.D. 60		
6	The Birth of Jesus		
4	The Death of Herod		

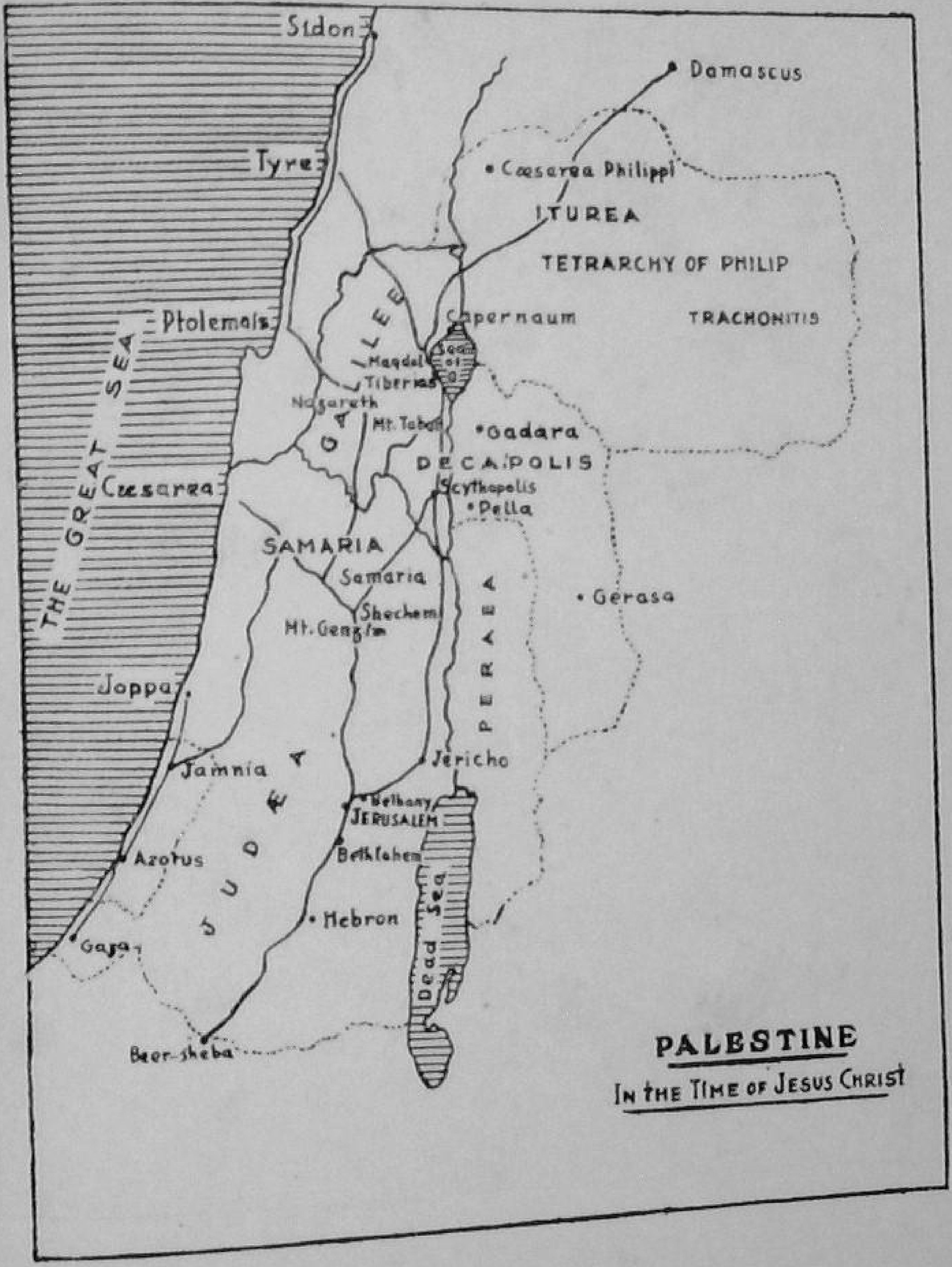
Dates A. D.	Events & Personalities in Christian History	Events & Personalities Outside	Literature
26–36		Pontius Pilate, Procurator	
29–30	Ministry & Death of Jesus		Literary activity of Philo (20-42)
32	Martyrdom of Stephen		
33	Conversion of Paul		
44	Martyrdom of James	Death of Herod Agrippa I, Rebellion of Theudas	
46–47	Famine in Palestine		
47–49	Paul's first missionary campaign	Emperor Claudius (41-54)	
49	Council at Jerusalem		
50	Jews banished from Rome		
50	Paul at Athens & Corinth		
52–66	Rebellions in Palestine	Emperor Nero (54-68)	
			Thessalonians, Galatians, Corinthians
52–54	Paul at Ephesus		
54–56	Paul's arrest at Jerusalem & imprisonment		
57–58	Paul prisoner at Rome		*Colossians, Ephesians, Philippians*

58	Paul's martyrdom		
64	Persecution of Christians by Nero		
64	Martyrdom of Peter at Rome		
66	Flight of Christians to Pella	Jews declare war against Rome	
70	Destruction of the Temple	Emperor Vespasian (70-79)	Josephus' *Jewish War*
		Emperor Titus (79-81)	
85–96	Domitian's persecution of Christians & Jews	Emperor Domitian (81-96)	*St. Mark, St. Matthew*
90	Jewish Synod at Jamnia: Canon of O. T. fixed	Emperor Nerva (96-98)	*St. Luke, Acts, Hebrews, I Peter, Josephus' Antiquities, Revelation*
		Emperor Trajan (98-117)	

APPENDIX III



THE BIBLICAL WORLD


Sidon
Damascus
Tyre
Cæsarea Philippi
ITUREA
TETRARCHY OF PHILIP
Ptolemais
Capernaum
TRACHONITIS
THE GREAT SEA
GALILEE
Magdal
Tiberias
Nazareth
Mt. Tabor
Gadara
DECAPOLIS
Cæsarea
Scythopolis
Pella
SAMARIA
Samaria
Gerasa
Shechem
Mt. Gerizim
PERAEA
Joppa
Jericho
Jamnia
JUDEA
Bethany
JERUSALEM
Azotus
Bethlehem
Dead Sea
Hebron
Gaza
Beer-sheba
PALESTINE
IN THE TIME OF JESUS CHRIST

OTHER BOOKS OF GENERAL INTEREST

	Rs	as	ps
A Discipline for Non-violence	0	10	0
An Atheist with Gandhi	1	0	0
A Pilgrimage for Peace	5	0	0
A Preparation for Science	0	12	0
A Righteous Struggle	1	8	0
Bapu — My Mother	0	12	0
Christianity — Its Economy & Way of Life	1	8	0
Clive to Keynes	0	12	0
Constructive Programme — Some Suggestions	0	8	0
Economics of Khaddar	2	0	0
Gandhiana : A Bibliography of Gandhian Literature	3	4	0
Gandhi and Marx	1	8	0
Gandhian Ethics	1	0	0
Gandhi's Challenge to Christianity	1	8	0
Practical Non-violence	0	12	0
Practice and Precepts of Jesus	1	8	0
Public Finance and Our Poverty	1	8	0
Sarvodaya	1	0	0
Satyagraha in Champaran	2	4	0
Seven Months with Mahatma Gandhi	4	0	0
Stray Glimpses of Bapu	2	0	0
The Political Philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi	6	0	0
The Power of Non-violence	2	8	0
The Story of Bardoli	2	8	0
To Women	0	6	0

In the Press

The Diaries of Mahadev Desai — Vol. I